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BLOOD AND STONE ON STAGE: PETER SHAFFER'S TRAGIC PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

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The specific purpose of this dissertation is to analyze four plays by Peter Shaffer—**The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, **Equus**, **Amadeus** and **Yonadab**—observing their use of theatrical devices and their relation with the principles of tragedy as proposed by Aristotle's **Poetics.** They are then compared with three important Greek plays—Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**, Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**, and Euripedes' **Medea**—, since the general objective of the present work is to discover whether there is modern tragedy, how it is shaped by Shaffer's plays, and how it differs from Greek tragedy. In the analysis undertaken it is verified that Shaffer's plays display several affinities with the Greek tragedies and follow many of the Aristotelian principles. However they are genuine examples of modern tragedy since they discuss contemporary serious issues and present challenging characters who face complex situations and ethical and metaphysical dilemmas. Furthermore Shaffer's plays have well-wrought plots, which combine with ability the several theatrical devices depicted, and culminate in an involving theatrical experience.

In the first chapter the theoretical paradigm of this dissertation is presented and analyzed—the theatrical devices and Aristotle's **Poetics**—showing how important they are to the study of theatre in general and tragedy in particular. In the second chapter the theoretical background is applied to the Greek plays selected, showing how they confirm and how they deviate from the Aristotelian principles. In the third chapter the same is done in relation to Peter Shaffer's plays. In the fourth chapter Peter Shaffer's plays are compared to the Greek ones, showing how a modern dramatist, through historical and mythical narratives, recreates tragic drama, using the several theatrical devices available to convey a tragic sense of life. The

Conclusion is that, considering the similarities and differences detected between Shaffer's plays and the Greek ones, Shaffer's plays can be considered relevant modern tragedies that recapture the tragic view, so important for the Greeks, in a modern context.

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Resumo

O objetivo específico desta tese é analisar quatro peças de autoria de Peter Shaffer—**The Royal Hunt of the Sun, Equus, Amadeus** e **Yonadab**—observando o uso de técnicas teatrais e a relação com os princípios da tragédia propostos por Aristóteles na **Poética.** Elas são então comparadas com três importantes peças gregas—**Prometeu Acorrentado,** de Ésquilo, **Édipo Rei,** de Sófocles e **Medéia,** de Eurípides—uma vez que o objetivo geral do presente trabalho é descobrir se existe tragédia moderna, de que forma ela é apresentada nas peças de Shaffer, e em que ela difere da tragédia grega. Na análise empreendida verifica-se que as peças de Shaffer apresentam muitas afinidades com as tragédias gregas e observam vários dos princípios estabelecidos por Aristóteles. No entanto elas se constituem em exemplares genuínos de tragédia moderna, pois discutem questões sérias atuais e apresentam personagens desafiadoras que enfrentam situações complexas e dilemas éticos e metafísicos. Além disso, as peças de Shaffer apresentam enredos muito bem elaborados, que combinam com habilidade os vários recursos teatrais descritos, e culminam numa experiência envolvente de teatro.

No primeiro capítulo o paradigma teórico da tese é apresentado e analisado—os elementos e recursos teatrais e a **Poética** de Aristóteles—, mostrando como eles são importantes para o estudo do teatro em geral e para a tragédia em particular. No segundo capítulo os vários itens da fundamentação teórica são aplicados às peças gregas selecionadas, mostrando como elas confirmam e como se desviam dos princípios aristotélicos. No terceiro capítulo, o mesmo é feito em relação às peças de Peter Shaffer. No quarto capítulo as peças de Peter Shaffer são comparadas às gregas, mostrando como um dramaturgo moderno, através de narrativas históricas e míticas, recria o drama trágico, usando os vários recursos teatrais disponíveis para transmitir uma perspectiva trágica da vida. A Conclusão é que, considerando as semelhanças e diferenças detectadas entre as peças de Shaffer e as gregas, as peças de Shaffer podem ser consideradas

tragédias modernas relevantes, que resgatam uma visão trágica da vida, tão importante para os gregos, num contexto moderno.

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Résumé

Le but spécifique de cette thèse est celui d'analyser quatre pièces de théâtre de Peter Shaffer—*The Royal Hunt of the Sun, Equus, Amadeus* et *Yonadab*—en observant leur usage des techniques théâtrales et leur rapport avec les principes de la tragédie comme proposés par la *Poétique* d'Aristote. Elles sont comparées à trois importantes pièces grecques—*Le Prométhée Enchaîné* de Eschyle, *Oedipe le Roi* de Sophocle, et *Médée* d'Euripide—, dans le but de découvrir s' il existe vraiment de tragédie moderne, comment elle est construite par Shaffer et dans quels aspects elle diffère de la tragédie grecque. Dans l'analyse entreprise il est vérifié que les pièces de théâtre de Shaffer présentent plusieurs affinités avec les tragédies grecques et suivent plusieurs principes aristotéliciens. Cependant ce sont aussi des exemples authentiques de tragédie moderne puisqu'elles discutent de sérieuses questions contemporaines et présentent des personnages provocateurs qui font face à des situations complexes aussi bien qu'à des dilemmes éthiques et métaphysiques. En outre, les pièces de théâtre de Shaffer ont des intrigues bien elaborées qui combinent habilement les différents recours théâtraux décrits et culminent par offrir une expérience théâtrale séduisante.

Dans le premier chapitre, le paradigme théorique de cette thèse est présenté et est analysé—les techniques théâtrales et la *Poétique* d'Aristote—pour mettre en évidence à quel point ils sont importants à l'étude du théâtre en général et de la tragédie en particulier. Dans le deuxième chapitre, ces mêmes critères théoriques sont appliqués aux pièces de théâtre grecques sélectionnées, en montrant comment elles confirment et comment elles dévient des principes aristotéliciens. Dans le troisième chapitre, le même procédé est appliqué aux pièces de théâtre de Peter Shaffer. Dans le quatrième chapitre, les pièces de théâtre de Peter Shaffer sont comparées aux grecques, en montrant comment un dramaturge moderne, à travers des récits historiques et mythiques, recrée le drame tragique, en utilisant les plusieurs recours théâtraux disponibles pour transmettre le sens tragique de la vie. La conclusion est que, étant donné les ressemblances et les différences détectées entre les pièces de théâtre de Shaffer et celles des Grecs, les premières

peuvent être considérées comme des tragédies modernes pertinentes qui reprennent la visée tragique, si importante pour les Grecs, dans un contexte moderne.

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Introduction

"Tragedy obviously does not lie in a conflict of Right and Wrong, but in a collision between two different kinds of Right..." (Shaffer "An introduction to three plays" **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, **Equus** and **Amadeus** vi). This commentary is a very suggestive hint on how Shaffer defines tragedy; it also indicates his concern with tragic matters and how he intends his plays to be included in the tragic sphere. He clearly intended to write tragedies, to revive an ancient tradition, and to revisit and contribute to the tragic genre. Thus Shaffer plunged into a rich tradition, offering his view as an alternative appropriation and continuation of a cultural heritage. His commentary was related to the three plays mentioned, which he saw as attempts at writing tragedies. His following play, **Yonadab**, will be seen in the same perspective. Indeed, an apparent tragic mark is immediately visible in Shaffer's plays: their plot, the seriousness of their themes, the grandeur of the spectacle they offer are an evidence of their author's intentions.

Each of the four plays mentioned is an inquisitive look at the world, a questioning of the universe, an enquiry about the meaning of life and individuality. But sometimes masks hide the actors' faces, or the characters' deepest intentions. There is blood behind them, the spectators soon find out, at the same time that violence is displayed on the stage. Nevertheless, it is not only through blood and masks that Shaffer establishes a connection with the Greek tragedies. His emphasis on theatre as spectacle, his use of dance and music, and his concern with aural and visual devices reveal a conception of theatre very akin to the Greek one: theatre as a multidimensional experience, centred on the word but moving beyond mere textuality. If one of his aims was to recapture the spectacle as one of the most important ingredients of the theatre, he succeeded. His plays obtained box-office success, exercised an enormous fascination upon the public and were awarded important prizes.

Peter Levin Shaffer was born on May 15, 1926, in Liverpool. He published three detective novels with his brother, using a pseudonym, entitled **The Woman in the Wardrobe** (1951). Between 1951 and 1954 he lived in New York, having worked in bookshops and department stores, and at the New York Public Library. Before writing stage plays, he wrote radio and television plays: **The Salt Land** (for the ITV-London, 1955), **The Prodigal Father** (for the

BBC, 1957), **Balance of Terror** (for the BBC-London and CBS-New York, 1957-58). His first stage play was **Five Finger Exercise** (1958). Subsequently, he staged **The Private Ear** and **The Public Eye** (1962), **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** (1964), **Black Comedy** (1965), **White Lies** and **Black Comedy** (1967), **White Liars**, which was a revision of **White Lies** (1968), **The Battle of Shrivings** (1970), **Equus** (1973), **Amadeus** (1979), **Yonadab** (1985), **Lettice and Lovage** (1987), **Whom Do I Have the Honour of Addressing?** (a radio play, 1989), and his last play **The Gift of the Gorgon** (1993) (Klein Chronology xv-xvi; Gianakaris 190-2).

Five Finger Exercise (1958) was Shaffer's first box-office success. It is a traditional drawing-room play, portraying the dramas of the middle-class. With **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** (1964) he started the writing of more spectacular and daring plays, using a great variety of theatrical devices: light and sound effects, choreography, music, in sum, a complete experience of theatre, and an amazing success with the public. With this play, Shaffer started to explore the visual resources in the theatre. As he progressed, each of his plays represented a different challenge in terms of theme, techniques, and costs.

Among his several influences, Peter Shaffer recognizes the contribution of Piscator, Brecht, Chinese opera, Noh theatre, and Greek tragedy. The psychiatry of R. D. Laing is already seen in **The Battle of Shrivings** and much more clearly in **Equus** (Taylor **Peter Shaffer** 25). Peter Shaffer himself recognizes the importance of John Dexter's ideas, his director, which helped to affect "the communal imagination of an audience" (A Note on the Text **Equus** 7). Shaffer attributes Dexter's economy of gestures to the esthetical influence of Noh Drama and to Bertolt Brecht: "the plain plank; the clear light; the great pleasure in a set-piece" (7). The visual and sound effects, the gestures and physical movements enhance the meaning of the play. Dexter also directed **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and **Black Comedy**, plays in which the visual action is as important as dialogue (7-8). As Gianakaris points out very clearly, "With **Royal Hunt** Shaffer continued to learn his craft, and, the separate scenes making up the play suggest its episodic nature. Shaffer's eclectic approach, however, avoids excess. Alongside Dexter's influence must be set that of Bertolt Brecht, whose ideas on stage epic Shaffer has long admired: he inaugurates his own epic narrator, later perfected in Dysart (**Equus**) and Salieri (**Amadeus**)" (Gianakaris **Peter Shaffer** 88). Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' really influenced Shaffer as a technique, but Shaffer was not a Marxist dramatist, and his intention was emotional and analytical, rather than rational or didactic. Besides the influence of Bertolt Brecht, MacMurraugh-Kavanagh comments that "Artaud's insistence on 'continual amplification' of sounds and noises, and his demand that

lighting should be used to influence and suggest, are also strategies employed in Shaffer's three best known works: **The Royal Hunt of the Sun, Equus** and **Amadeus**" (**Peter Shaffer** 25).

For the sake of objectivity and control of the corpus, I will limit my study to four plays that could be classified as attempts at tragedies and that refer to historical narratives with clear, and sometimes direct, indications of the sources. They are the most important plays by Shaffer and the most celebrated ones: **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, which recreates the drama of the conquest of the Inca empire by Francisco Pizarro, the murderer of Atahuallpa; **Amadeus**, which recreates the life and death of Mozart, according to the narrative of Salieri, his most famous opponent and accused of having poisoned the composer (recalling facts that took place between 1781 and 1791); **Yonadab**, which recreates the drama involving the figure of king David and Yonadab, his nephew, servant and narrator of the story (a biblical episode); and **Equus**, which was based on a newspaper report about a boy who blinded six horses. In the four plays there is a character-narrator who recalls and tells the story; with the exception of **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, the narrator is also the main character.

Taking into consideration Shaffer's alleged intention of creating tragic plays, his consciousness of and fascination with Greek culture, and his knowledge of the Greek theatre, so often alluded to in his plays, I have decided to study them vis-à-vis three important and representative Greek tragedies: Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**, Sophocles' **Oedipus**, and Euripides' **Medea**. Such a choice led me inevitably to Aristotle's **Poetics**, the fundamental theoretical framework of tragedy in the Western world.[1] Thus, the Aristotelian concepts, as presented in the **Poetics** and as discussed by several scholars, have provided me with a most important means to establish a comparison between Shaffer's plays and the Greek tragedies selected. *Plot, hybris*[2]*, hamartia, peripety, anagnorisis, pathos, pity and fear, catharsis and mimesis* will be scrutinized in the Greek plays as well as in Shaffer's plays. When it comes to *mimesis*, Shaffer's sources (W.H. Prescott's **History of the Conquest of Peru**, the biblical narrative of king David's life, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's opera **Mozart et Salieri**, Wolfgang

[1] The influence of Aristotle's **Poetics** can even be observed in a thinker like Sigmund Freud. Chapter XIV of the **Poetics**, which develops the relation between pity and fear and the tragic act, for example, presents many important subjects for the Freudian analysis: "... when an enemy attacks an enemy there is nothing pathetic about either the intention or the deed, except in the actual pain suffered by the victim; but when the tragic acts come within the limits of close blood relationship, as when brother kills or intends to kill brother or do something else of that kind to him, or son to father or mother to son or son to mother—those are the situations one should look for" (Aristotle **Poetics** 41). Nothwithstanding, my analysis will not follow the Freudian approach.

Hildesheimer's **Mozart**, and some other documents suggesting Salieri's participation in Mozart's death) will be dealt with, in an attempt to visulize how, through the theatrical techniques, he modified and adapted them to his purposes.

It goes without saying that theatre has developed its own language and its own body of techniques. So, besides using Aristotle's **Poetics**, I shall analyze the plays that constitute the corpus of this work according to their use of theatrical devices: characterization, tension, structure, language, the chorus, sound effects, costumes, lighting, choreography, music, scenery and dialogues. The study of a play as a literary work has a great deal of limitation, especially in the case of Peter Shaffer's plays, in which the visual and aural aspects are so important. The playwright himself says that the most important features of a play are the gestures, the action seen on stage, and the illusion, the imaginative transformation of reality ("An Introduction" **The Royal Hunt** iv). He confesses however that he cannot underrate the value of the written text, which he considers of "paramount" importance (v). Fortunately he provides extensive and clear stage directions and indications on how the scenes should be enacted and presented, taking as reference the productions he clearly appreciated most. Therefore I base my analysis on the texts published by Shaffer himself, which contain not only his directions but also descriptions of the scenario and of the costumes.

Thus the aims of this dissertation are to evaluate to what extent Shaffer's possible tragedies follow or deviate from the Greek models, and to verify whether the differences detected are meaningful and numerous to the point of annihilating the possibility of tragedy, as established by Aristotle, a conclusion that would lead one to agree with George Steiner when he says that contemporary society has developed so many institutions and expedients to avoid suffering, guilt and pain, and discarded the external interference of nature or the gods so effectively that tragedy has no place in it. In his own words, "[w]here the causes of disaster are temporal, where the conflicts can be resolved through technical or social means, we may have serious drama, but not tragedy" (8). Besides, adds Steiner, the three myths that still survive in our age—reason, Christianity and Marxism—are unsuitable "to a revival of tragic drama" (324); they are anti-tragic because they are intrinsically hopeful.[3] However, one may be led to conclude that, in spite

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[2] Although not specifically mentioned by Aristotle in the **Poetics**, the term *hybris* is often linked with the tragic hero by scholars such as Nussbaum (274), Costa (10), Kitto (**Tragédia** 334), and Brandão (**Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 11).

[3] Nietzsche sees Socratism, morality, rationalism, and dialectics as the causes for the death of tragedy (Nietzsche **The Birth of Tragedy** 4).

of the differences detected between Shaffer's plays and the Greek ones analyzed, there is still room for tragedy, that its main elements have been preserved by Shaffer.

Indeed there is a debate among scholars about the possibility or impossibility of tragedy in the present time. Agreeing with Steiner but rejecting his arguments, John Szelisky thinks that our age has not produced successful tragedies because of its excessive pessimism since real tragedy is optimistic in relation to the human being and to the human experience in the world (3-4). Raymond Williams, on the other hand, though believing that Greek tragedy was a unique experience that cannot be repeated (17) still affirms the existence of modern tragedy because, in his Marxist view, tragedy is the development and resolution of social conflicts, a social process, and as such cannot be denied (46). Its characteristics, however, have changed, and he enumerates some of them: the oscillation between order and accident, the destruction of the hero, the "irreparable action," and the emphasis on evil. According to this author, Greek tragedy was a collective experience, of which the chorus is a signal; our age, on the other hand, is characterized by individualism and lack of social unity, which make genuine tragedy a very difficult achievement (Williams 18).

In order to attain my purposes I kept the following questions in mind: what is Greek tragedy and what are its main characteristics? What are the main characteristics of Shaffer's plays? In what aspects are Shaffer's plays and the Greek ones similar? In what aspects are they different? How meaningful are the differences and similarities detected? When we say "modern tragedy," as represented by Shaffer's plays, the adjective "modern" refers to a certain age, or to a certain type, or to both?

Tragedy as conveyed by Aristotle in the **Poetics**, and by some scholars, and an overview of theatrical devices are used in order to investigate the presence and function of those items in the plays selected for analysis. The next step (the third chapter) consists in a reflective comparison between the Greek plays and Shaffer's, with regard to the Aristotelian concepts related to tragedy and theatrical devices. *Comparison*, in this case, is being used with the meaning provided by **Webster's Third New International Dictionary**, which includes the analysis of "resemblances and differences," "contrasts and similarities" (462). A conclusion will follow, in which I shall summarize the main points of the work, present my final comments on Shaffer's plays and discuss the questions raised.

In order to keep the neutrality of the analysis, the criticism on Shaffer's plays was the last step of the present work and duly inserted in it. I realized that some of my conclusions had already been attained by some critics, whereas others differ completely from theirs.

Chapter I

Theoretical Background

Although the experience of the Greeks with theatre was limited in terms of time, less than a century of intense cultural production, its influence on the theatre of the entire Western World is undeniable, from the Renaissance to the present time. The Greeks were the first tragedians of Western culture to produce a great number of successful and refined plays, and the first also to create a theory of tragedy, although later the Romans developed their own peculiar approach, as did the Elizabethans, the neo-classicals, and the Romantics. The twentieth century also presents a large number of theories of drama and literary and theatrical movements. In this Chapter, I will present the theoretical background that is going to be used in the analysis of both the Greek and Shaffer's plays.

[A] Aristotle's **Poetics**

The first step of my study is concerned with the work of Aristotle: the **Poetics**. Aristotle (384-322 b.C.) was the first philosopher to analyze seriously the phenomenon of tragedy in Greek culture. His work **Poetics** was written some time between 335 and 323 b.C. His other works which could give important hints on art and aesthetics, like **Homeric Problems**, **Didascálias**, and **Poets,** did not survive. There was also a continuation to the **Poetics**, a book dealing with comedy, but it did not survive either. Although the **Poetics** makes reference to different forms of art, like epic poetry, comedy, dithyrambs, music of flute and of the lyre, it really concentrates on a theory of tragedy. It influenced many critics, literary and artistic movements, triggering discussions and reactions in favor and against it. The work has been adored, condemned, and nowadays it still commands attention as an important document of human culture.

Aristotle's principles of tragedy are systematically presented in his **Poetics**. There, Aristotle defines and presents the principles of tragic drama. Over the centuries, many tragedians

have followed Aristotle's guidelines, using them as reference to their artistic creation. Aristotle defines tragedy as:

> a process of imitating an action which has serious imphcations,
> is complete, and possesses magnitude; by means of language which
> has been made sensuously attractive... enacted by the persons themselves
> and not presented through narrative; through a course of pity and fear
> completing the purification of tragic acts which have those emotional
> characteristics. (25)

This tight definition contains several elements that can be analyzed separately and generate illuminating discussions: imitation, action, characters, pity and fear, *catharsis*. Besides these terms, Aristotle's **Poetics** offers also very important notions as characteristic of tragedy: *hamartia*, *nemesis*, *anagnorisis*, *pathos*.

The first element of the definition is imitation—corresponding to the Greek word *mimesis*—which for Aristotle was a positive term and a valid artistic experience. Aristotle saw mimesis as part of human nature, giving pleasure, purifying emotions, teaching about human actions (20). According to Aristotle's definition, tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; it is not the imitation of an object or of a concrete element of nature. Aristotle clarifies that tragedy is imitation through language. Theater involves scenery, gestures, physical actions, but what is more elemental in drama is language. Stephen Halliwell understands Aristotle's notion of *mimesis* as being more than the passive copying of similarities in nature, but as an interpretation, a cognition, a discovery of significance in the real world ("Pleasure" 247).

Aristotle's view of *mimesis* as a valid representation of human life following its own rules and means contrasts with Plato's negative notion of drama.[4] For Plato, *mimesis* aims at the deception of the audience, convincing the audience to take deception as their own aim, teaching virtue or vice. Plato argues that drama has too much power of influence on human behavior—it is too dangerous. Besides, according to Plato, the author can pretend to show a knowledge that he really does not have, falsely portraying sometimes a king, a soldier, a mariner. Plato's reasons are moral (**The Republic** II-III, X). Contrasting with Plato's negative attitude, Aristotle sees imitation as an instrument of learning habits and forming character, based on virtue (**Nicomachean Ethics** 1103b21 ff.).

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[4] Correcting Plato's distortion of *mimesis*, Aristotle says that "What art imitates is 'characters and emotions and actions,—not the sensible world, but the world of man's mind'" (*apud* Ross 287).

In Gerald F. Else's opinion, Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* suggests something active, something more than the mere copying of details of the real world, and more than the abstract notion of "presentation" or "representation" (Notes 79). It is concrete, it is active. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty prefers to mix the two notions of *mimesis* in the expression "imitative representation of a serious action" ("The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy" 2). The two notions are conjoined: imitation and representation, one referring to an external reality and the other referring to the artistic recreation of this reality (Rorty 4). There are other possibilities for the meaning of *mimesis*: "imitation, image-making, representation, reproduction, expression, fiction, emulation, make-believe" (Woodruff 73), but I agree with Rorty in regard to the definition of *mimesis* as imitation and representation, because it implies an act of selection and abstraction by the tragedian, a very conscious, organized, and structured exercise of art.

According to Paul Woodruff, when *mimesis* is effectively created, the audience is touched in terms of attention and emotion; *mimesis* seduces, affects, and convinces (81). *Mimesis* affects the audience because it deals with universal values related to human behavior (82). For Aristotle, the deceptive nature of *mimesis* is not a problem, but a quality: by being convincing and following its own rules, it achieves the goal of "eliciting" the emotions of pity and fear (84-5). Tragedy must deceive in order to reach an emotional response. Tragedy moves on the verge of convincing the audience that what is happening on stage is true in order to evoke pity and fear, but its status as fiction must be kept so as to give pleasure rather than pain (86). This double operation reflects the complexity of theater as an art involving technique, knowledge, emotion, and even philosophical depth.[5] The audience recognizes the fictionality of the particular character on stage, at the same time that it recognizes the reality of a universal truth, a "deep truth dressed in a superficial falsehood" (Woodruff 87). The audience realizes the general point and is emotionally affected by the particular events shown on stage. The particular character and action touch the emotion, and the general truth, the theme, satisfies the mind (88). Woodruff disagrees with the idea of *mimesis* as simply imitation, reproduction, fiction, image-making, likeness, or even representation. He admits that *mimesis* can even use fictional resources, but it is something added to fiction, something different that can enrich fiction in order to convince and affect the audience (90).

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[5] *Mimesis* is representation, not duplication of reality. The pleasure it gives is the pleasure of knowledge and the pleasure of "the sensuous delight in such things as colour, tune, rhythm" (Ross 289).

Action is the second element of Aristotle's definition, and he considers it the soul of tragedy, more important than character. The arrangement of the actions, the general organization of the incidents is called plot (Aristotle 26). A good plot is characterized as complete, as a whole (having a beginning, a middle, and an end), and of a certain magnitude (not too long, not too short) (30). The quality of being complete (unity of action) is the most important characteristic of a tragedy, for Aristotle (32).[6] Another important issue is the plot organized according to the principle of probability and necessity, cause and consequence; such a plot is better than the episodic plot, in which the incidents are placed in separate and distinct sectors without being linked in terms of cause and consequence (34). In Greek tragedy, the story is well known by the public, what is new is the sequence of events as manipulated by a particular dramatist, the treatment of the story. Plots can be simple or complex; the complex ones are those that include "reversal" and "recognition" (35), and they are better, because they arouse pity and fear (37). A good plot has only one change of fortune, from good to bad, and not the contrary (38-9).[7]

Aristotle presents different kinds of tragedy: 1) the complex (containing peripety and recognition); 2) the pathetic (passion); 3) the ethical (moral); 4) the "episodic" (50). In Greek tragedy most of the action happens offstage, reported by the characters through dialogue. Thus many important elements of plot happen outside drama, events taking place before the drama starts, as well as violent or supernatural incidents (Roberts 137; Freeland 113).

Aristotle condemns the double plot, the plot that portrays the hero's success and his adversary's ruin, because it diminishes the tragic effect of arousing pity and fear, in spite of the popularity of happy endings and the taste of the people for vengeance. Aristotle prefers single plots, with only one change of fortune.[8] In this respect, Euripides' **Medea** seems not to confirm Aristotle's principle, for in it Jason, the traitor, is punished and Medea, the betrayed wife and the murderer of her own children, escapes unpunished.

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[6] For Bittner, the unity offered by the plot of a play does not have a reference in real life, because life is more than fragmentary, it is only partial; the ideal of unity is an illusion, something that can be found only in drama, not in life (109). And this seems to reinforce the idea that *mimesis* is more than mere imitation of reality; it implies some sort of recreation.

[7] It portrays "good people" changing from good to bad fortune because of some mistake, followed by peripety and recognition. The movement is from good to bad fortune, from ignorance to knowledge, from recognition to regret (Aristotle 37-8).

[8] "... the insistence on 'one action' serves to exclude two types of plot—first, the episodic plot, in which a sequence of unrelated incidents follow one another: secondly, a layered plot, in which plots and subplots intertwine" (Barnes 282). Barnes openly disagrees with the view of Aristotle's prescription of a single plot, considering it trivial and pernicious.

Tragedy, as defined by Aristotle, is the *mimesis* of a serious action. There are four patterns of action in tragedy: 1) the hero does what he decides to do, like in **Medea**; 2) the hero does something terrible unwittingly, like Oedipus; 3) the hero stops short of doing the terrible deed, like Iphigenia; 4) the hero decides to do the terrible thing but fails, like Haemon (41). For Aristotle, 4 and 1 are inferior, and 2 and 3 are superior.[9]

Character is the third very important element of Aristotle's definition of tragedy, only subsidiary to action (27). In fact, characters are formed by the actions performed, by the choices they make, by their conscious actions. The tragic hero, according to Aristotle, must be someone between extremes, not totally just and good, not totally involved in vice and depravity, but someone who commits some error or is passive of some frailty (38). The hero, generally, belongs to a noble and prosperous family, a prince, a king, but his virtue is of character; he is serious, good, he has "moral quality" (27, 38). Another important characteristic: the character must be appropriate, true to life (likeness to human nature in general), and consistent, according to his fictional universe, in order to be convincing (43). But the character cannot be either too bad, wicked, or too good, like a saint, but someone in the middle, better than most of us. The hero must be a good person, his suffering must be undeserved, he must be similar to the members of the audience (Nussbaum 276).

A very important notion linked with the concept of character is the notion of *hamartia*, according to which the protagonist, in spite of being a good person, should commit some kind of error, a mistake (Aristotle 38). This mistake has great weight and consequence and causes a change of fortune. According to Rorty, *hamartia* is a "deflection—to an erring waywardness—that brings disaster" (2). Characters, as human beings, are capable of thought and are susceptible to waywardness (Rorty "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy" 7). But what is *hamartia*? chance? accident? error? misdirection? Sometimes excess of virtue can be at the root of *hamartia*, excess of energy and vigor, excess of will and decision. The translation of *hamartia* as tragic flaw, as a defect of character, can be misleading, since the protagonist is a virtuous and exemplary person (Rorty 10).[10] But at the same time *hamartia* is not an involuntary act, otherwise

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[9] Martha Nussbaum comments that even in tragedies in which the hero is saved and the disaster is averted at the last moment, pity and fear can be aroused, because the audience still feels a sense of vulnerability and that salvation hangs by a thread of luck (280). Euripides' **Medea**, then, in spite of not being a first-rate tragedy according to the Aristotelian principles, can prove to be very effective as a tragedy.

[10] "It is reasonably plain that a *hamartia* is not a defect of character—a *hamartia* is an event, an action, something that you do when you go wrong in some way. The misfortune of Aristotelian Heroes depends on what they do"

it would not cause fear. It is there inside the character, not in the form of a defect, but sometimes in the very form of virtue. Even admirable traits of character, noble intentions can promote *hamartia* and bring reversals of fortune (10-11). As Rorty says, it is "an accident of his excellence" (11), since courage can become imprudence, virtue can become arrogance, concentration can become lack of attention. Considering Aristotle's notion of *hamartia* presented in his **Nicomachean Ethics**, it is possible to define it as missing virtue because of weakness, accident or lack of knowledge (II,5,1106b,25ff.); it is doing wrong without being moved by malice or wickedness (III,13, 1118b,16ff.). Intellectual deficiency producing moral implications is sometimes implied in this notion of *hamartia* (III, 1,1110b,18ff.).

Hamartia implies decision; the hero has some alternatives of conduct, he is free to accept or not the contingencies of destiny. Of course the ancient Greek notion of freedom is intimately related and surrounded by the decrees and interferences of the gods. Humankind is not autonomous from divinity, therefore characters' decisions are made in freedom, and at the same time, determined. Absolute freedom, or the possibility of doing everything without any kind of limitation, is something strange to human experience, even in our contemporary times. There is freedom because there is choice, but even the choice is influenced or somehow surrounded by the presence and the oracles of the gods, although the presence of the gods is sometimes kept at bay and has, apparently, a decorative function. Sometimes the entire family of the hero is under a curse, from generation to generation. Guilt is then created before the hero's existence, before life itself; it is inherited, independently from what the hero does, as something inevitable, something more near ignorance, or lack of knowledge. There is an imposition of fate, but characters can react differently towards this imposition; they can accept or resist fate. The hero is kept in the mistaken action, although he chooses and his hands operate the deed, sometimes the best option, the good deed. Comparing Aristotle's **Nicomachean Ethics** to his **Poetics**, Cynthia Freeland develops the notion of "moral luck," according to which someone makes a decision, although the person's decision depends on factors beyond control (117). She also recognizes that the hero's freedom of choice is very limited and dependent. However, the hero's unhappiness is the result of his wrong decision and mistake, although unavoidable—using the words of Nancy Sherman: "Tragedy works through the agent's own hands" (177-8). The hero is free to decide and choose, but he is not free from ignorance, which makes his decision a very ambiguous act. His *hamartia* does not have a moral implication, the hero is not culpable, he is still innocent although

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(Barnes 280).

responsible. *Hamartia*, then, can be defined as an unavoidable mistake bringing incurable suffering, implying agency and causal [but not moral] responsibility (Sherman 178). Frede seems to disagree with the others. According to her, the protagonist's ignorance is not entire, he should have known or at least suspected (Frede 213). *Hamartia* is not a minor but a very disastrous error (Freeland 180), it involves not only a deformed intelligence but also a strong will and a determination. Contrasting with the general philosophical tendencies of the ancient time, tragedy teaches that good men can be harmed by their own virtues, and happiness is not a question of human choice (Nussbaum 263).

The most serious and strongest predispositon to *hamartia* is *hybris*, the attitude of going beyond the measure, of being arrogant and full of presumption before the gods, the so-called Biblical pride. *Hybris* leads to the crossing of the lines designed by the gods to the human beings; it is a lack of modesty, of knowledge, of resignation (Rorty "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy" 17-8). *Hybris* makes the hero go beyond the *métron*, the measure stipulated by gods for men, and to hurt himself by causing the jealous wrath of the gods, *nemesis*. *Hybris* is the trait that makes the hero admirable and at the same time reproachful.

If *hamartia* suggests limitation in the hero in terms of knowledge, *anagnorisis* indicates the very moment in tragedy in which the protagonist recognizes his deeds, his mistake and the consequences of it, a change from ignorance to knowledge (Aristotle 36). The recognition can occur in many different ways: 1) by signs (tokens, marks, this is less artistic); 2) by the poet (an inartistic device); 3) by recollection (memory); 4) by reasoning (the second best); 5) by the events themselves (natural way, the best way) (45-7). *Anagnorisis* sometimes is linked with *peripety*—the reversal of the situation (28), which characterizes the best tragedies. *Peripety* is the shift from good fortune to bad fortune, from happiness to disgrace.

According to Aristotle, *pathos* is a third basic element of tragedy, following recognition and *peripety*. It conveys the idea of a "destructive or painful act" like scenes of death, physical suffering, woundings, and those hurtful experiences that affect directly the emotions (37) (in Greek drama, always happening off stage). Gerald Else understands *pathos* as generally indicating hurtful actions undergone by the protagonist (Notes 80). Kitto defines *pathos* as the passive suffering of innocent victims (generally women and children, like in the scene portraying the killing of Medea's children); it indicates excessive suffering which arouses pity in the audience, contrasting with the tragic suffering undergone by the hero (**Tragédia** 190). Well, Aristotle does not restrict *pathos* to the suffering of non-responsible victims. In fact, the context

seems to indicate that it is part of the plot, it is a scene following the scenes of recognition and peripety, all centered in the figure of the hero. "Pathos" is the most important element of the tragic structure because of its emotional potentialities and because of its position, near the end of the play, as a climax. It is the scene of suffering, after the recognition and *peripety*. Aristotle adds that the pathetic action is much more effective when it comes by "surprise" and according to the rule of "cause and effect," the logic of the plot (35). *Pathos* is the tragic painful act that arouses and purifies the emotions. According to Aristotle, it can be done: 1) with knowledge; 2) without knowledge; 3) or it can be not done; 4) can be not done because of knowledge (41). Critics like Gerald Else (Notes 80), Nehamas (307), and Lear (330) sometimes use the word *pathos* very specifically to suggest an incident, part of the plot, a terrible incident, and sometimes a strong emotion, a very painful feeling. The concept of *pathos* is also sometimes confused with *catastrophe*, which can be translated as overturn, the turn down, suggesting the resolution of the plot, the *dénouement*, the unknotting of the threads, the end of tragedy.

"Pity" and "fear" are two terms very much linked and important in Aristotle's **Poetics**. They indicate that Aristotle considered emotion a positive aspect of human life, and an important element of tragedy, contrasting with the negative view of Plato (Else Introduction 6). The principal aim of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear, and these feelings are desirable and not harmful, the emotional side of poetry being accepted as well as the intellectual side. Pity is aroused by excessive misfortune, and fear by the misfortune of a man like us. The suffering of the hero arouses pity because it is incomprehensible, it arouses fear because we identify with the hero, and it could happen to us (Aristotle 38). Pity and fear may be aroused by the actors themselves, but in the best tragedies they are aroused by the plot, by the structure of the incidents (40). When the plot is well done, the audience feels pity and fear only by listening to it, without any visual aid (40). The best situations are those in which closely related people are involved: for example, when a brother kills or intends to kill a brother, mother and son, son and father, etc. (41). The question of fear and pity has a political aspect, as well as a philosophical one: "What is and what is not worth fearing?" or "Whom should we pity?" (Rorty 12). These emotions point to the proximity and the distance of the other who is suffering, the identification of the audience with the hero.

The experience of fear and pity in theater is not the same felt in real life. Like a ritual, theater provides a safe way of experiencing these emotions, artificially (Kosman 64). The fear that tragedies convey is not literal, the fear of killing a father or mother, but it is more like a

terrifying recognition of how happiness is fragile, how human choices can fail, how human character is limited and doomed to imperfection. The general teaching of tragedy can be very pessimistic, in a way, for even our virtues and our best actions and good, correct decisions can end disastrously; it arouses a sense that sometimes our happiness is destroyed not by any defect of character, or any external force, but by the gratuity of our very actions. Pity is directed to excessive suffering, when the suffering exceeds the amount of due punishment, or when the protagonist is not guilty at all. Fear is an experience linked with pity, in the sense that it is the result of the consciousness of suffering and reversals; the acknowledgement that there is at least the possibility of this suffering happening to me, a sense of human vulnerability (Nussbaum 267).[11] Aristotle's pessimism is counterbalanced by his belief that even when unhappiness comes, the individual can overcome it through nobility of character; the virtuous man can resist bad fortune (**Nicomachean Ethics** 1101a3-4).

Pity and fear lead us to *catharsis*, a term that is not of easy definition. Until 1928 there were 150 different notions of *catharsis* (Brandão **Tragédia e Comédia** 12), and the debate did not stop at that time. So I can be sure that I will not exhaust the discussion now, but I can analyze the different notions and present the best alternatives in my view. *Catharsis* is a Greek term used in medicine and religion. As a medical term, it refers to a therapeutic cleansing or purgation of an infected body, a discharge of impurity; as a religious term it refers to spiritual purification generally achieved through ritual. There was a third meaning for the word: intellectual clarification of the mind (Rorty "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy" 14). The three meanings were current in Aristotle's time, but we do not know which one he had in mind. For Gerald Else, *catharsis* is the purification of what is "filthy" or "polluted" in the *pathos*—which indicates an emotional and intellectual experience (Notes 98). In a way, the hero, by suffering the consequences of his *hamartia*, by pain and hurt, becomes pure, his deed becomes pure; there is a kind of sacrificial atonement of his mistake; he pays the price, it satisfies the audience's notion of justice thus purifying its emotions (98). *Catharsis* then means to purify, to purge, and the majority of explanations point out the effect that pity and fear operate in the spectator (98). The excessive suffering of the protagonist arouses the spectator's pity and fear, and this purifies and

[11] While pity is addressed to the hero's misfortune and suffering, fear is directed to the audience (Nussbaum 275).

clarifies his emotional reactions, bringing pleasure and understanding (Rorty 2).[12] Rorty agrees with Else in the understanding of *catharsis* as an experience that involves emotion and reason, feeling and learning (2).

According to Aryeh Kosman, there is a meaning in *catharsis* that goes beyond the mere notion of liberation of pity and fear (66). In a sense, *catharsis* is the chance tragedy gives us of accepting suffering and ambiguity in human life, of accepting the limits of human happiness and goodness (Kosman 66-7). This interpretation fits the therapeutic and medical aspect of the word, since, through the artificiality of theater, the audience becomes able to restore the human capacity to forgive and heal the unconscious sense of guilt about the "tragic misaction" (68).[13] Freeland also states that the experience of *catharsis* has a cognitive aspect; it implies an intellectual judgment about what is being presented in the play; the audience exercises its capacity for appropriate judgment of moral issues and problems presented in the play (122-3). Halliwell also understands tragedy as deriving a "cognitively grounded pleasure" (245). He is also optimistic about the function of tragedy as giving knowledge from an experience of the past and teaching also something new, "something that builds and enlarges our existing understanding" (252). The objective of tragedy is then to generate cognition and pleasure, through the experience of fear and pity (253-4). For Aristotle, comments Nussbaum, pity and fear "can be genuine sources of understanding, showing the spectator possibilities that are there for good people" (281). Nussbaum says, in addition, that tragedy provides for the audience, in the middle of wartime, the chance of being cleaned of obstacles to goodness, obstacles such as "forgetfulness, ignorance, self-preoccupation, military passion," obstacles that are "cleared up" by the experience of pity and fear (282-3).[14] For Nehamas, the idea of *catharsis* is that of emotion being transformed and

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[12] Augusto Boal, however, has a very negative, politically imbued remark on the Aristotelian notion of *catharsis*. For him, *catharsis* is an ideolgy, an artifice of keeping society under control. For him, Greek tragedy is a form of repression on society. For Boal, "Tragedy, in all its qualitative and quantitative aspects, exists as a function of the effect it seeks, catharsis. All the unities of tragedy are structured around this concept.... Catharsis is correction..." (Boal "Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy" 132).

[13] However, we must be careful with the therapeutic view of tragedy. Dr Bentley has a funny commentary on the view of theatre as therapy: "To maintain flatly that theatre itself is or should be therapeutic will only lead us to the conclusion that it has less to offer than other therapies. If one had a serious mental illness, no amount of theatregoing in even the greatest of theatres could be expected to help very much. Dr. Sophocles and Dr. Shakespeare would find themselves hopelessly unable to compete with Drs. Smith and Jones on Central Park West, neither of whom has ever laid claim to genius" (Bentley **Theatre of War: Modern Drama, From Ibsen to Brecht** 226).

[14] Martin Esslin has an interesting view on *catharsis* as an existential insight very similar to rehgious experience: "And in ritual as in drama the aim is an enhanced level of consciousness, a memorable insight into the nature of

improved by rationality; pity and fear can be improved by rational considerations and processes (293-5). *Catharsis*, then, is clarification and resolution, not of fear and pity as emotions, but of fearful and pitiful incidents that are part of the plot; *catharsis* would be the resolution, the *dénouement* of the tragic plot (307). Lear is against the idea of *catharsis* as purgation of emotions, even in the homeopathic sense;[15] for him, it does not seem to be a serious interpretation (317). Pity and fear are not impure emotions that need to be purified or transformed (Lear 318). *Catharsis* is not any corrective thing, the purgation of pathology, the purification of pollution, the education of emotions (327). For Lear, it is the pleasure of experiencing emotion through imagination, experiencing pity and fear in a fictional, virtual world, in a "safe environment,"[16] just playing, not being real (334).[17] According to Lear's interpretation of Aristotle, the fundamental fear we experience in tragedy is the fear of chaos, the breakdown of meaning, and *catharsis* is just this consolation that the individual can endure risks, human beings can conduct themselves with dignity and nobility, the consolation according to which the worst things have already happened and the world has not lost its meaning (334-5). Janko, on the other hand, believes in *catharsis* as being the education of emotions, of proper emotions (342-3), pity and fear specifically,[18] although he recognizes that tragedy can cause a great variety of emotional effects (350). Janko disagrees with the interpretation of *catharsis* as clarification of the plot, because this interpretation does not consider seriously Aristotle's **Politics** (346). He seems to suggest that *catharsis* is a relief of emotions both of the audience and of the protagonist, by the recognition of the causes of misfortune, by enlightenment (Janko 346).[19] For Janko, the objective

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existence, a renewal of strength in the individual to face the world. In dramatic terms: catharsis; in religious terms: communion, enlightenment, illumination" (**Anatomy** 28).

[15] "The followers of [J.] Bernays hold that catharsis consists in removing the spectators' excessive emotions [an homeopathic process], which are inherently undesirable. The best audience for a tragedy will then be composed of people pathologically disposed to feel excessive emotions, i.e.,... with an excess of black bile.... Bernay's interpretation seems to imply a consequence that Aristotle would certainly reject: that the wise and virtuous do not benefit from the process" (Janko 346).

[16] Real fear and real pity can occur in theatre and in film, "But this is not the sort of thing which Aristotle has in mind. Indeed, he cannot have real pity and genuine fear in mind at all; for he refers to the *pleasure* which comes from the pity and the fear (14, 1453b12); and genuine pity and real fear do not cause pleasure" (Barnes 278). [Aristotle is talking of an aesthetic experience]

[17] Ross also emphasizes *catharsis* as related to pleasure and emotion. *Catharsis* means purgation of emotions, like in the medical use of a song. "cathartic melodies are distinguished from those which are ethical and aim at 'instruction,' i.e. at improvement of character" (Ross 292). Thus the aim of tragedy is pleasure, not the moral purification of the passions.

[18] Junito Brandão says: "Catarse, *kátharsis*, significa na linguagem médica grega, de que se originou, purgação, purificação. Diz Aristóteles que a tragédia, pela compaixão e terror, provoca uma catarse própria a tais emoções, isto é, relativa exclusivamente ao terror e à piedade e não a todas as paixões que carregamos em nossa alma" (Brandão **Tragédia e Comédia** 13).

[19] "A catarse de que andamos à procura é o esclarecimento último que transformará uma história dolorosa numa

of tragedy is to teach and habituate the audience to feel the appropriate emotional reactions to the appropriate objects (353). In my opinion, tragedy provides an emotional relief of pitiful and fearful experiences of human life in the audience, as well as an intellectual experience, the achievement of a new understanding, and also the exercise of moral faculties, the study and positioning about human situations.

These are the most important elements of the Aristotelian vision of tragedy. They do not cover all the complexities of Aristotle's text or the long interminable debate of the scholars about the **Poetics**, but they offer basic guidelines and definitions of terms. The importance of Aristotle in the study of tragic drama must not be overstated, but it must no be underestimated. His ideas, altough not exhaustive, are fundamental in any serious consideration of drama as Art.

[B] Theatrical Devices and Conventions

In addition to those important Aristotelian concepts about tragedy in particular, and before the study of the Greek plays, it is necessary to comment on and analyze the theatrical devices and conventions in general, considering what are the main resources the dramatist has to work with, in order to see how efficiently the Greek plays work as drama and how the different techniques are applied to them. There are many aspects to be considered, like characterization, structure, language, dialogue, tension, theme, costumes, visual and sound effects, setting, the use of the Chorus, stage directions, the theater as spectacle, music and dance, and gestures. My study is limited to the level of playtext analysis, trying to grasp the possibilities of virtual realizations suggested by the plays.

Characterization is one of the fundamental devices the playwright has to create and develop in drama. Aristotle, in his **Poetics**, already commented on the hero as representing someone superior in relation to the audience and at the same time someone the audience can be identified with. He also emphasized how the hero is developed through action and the use of language. Characterization includes not only the hero but all the characters in the play, even the least important ones. Of course, there are complex characters, those more developed by the author, showing psychological depth, and there are minor characters. However, it is important to know that all the characters should be functional, they exist and receive certain qualities because they have some dramatic function to fulfill. In drama, because of the restraints of time and

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profunda e comovedora experiência" (Kitto **Tragédia** 261).

medium, it is impossible to have characters without a clear function. Therefore, characters are subject to a scheme of subordination, according to their function in the play, being around and serving what is the center of interest (Dawson 34-5). Stereotypes are not strange or forbidden in drama. There is not much time to develop all the characters, and the type characters accomplish their function as secondary figures of the play. The central characters can receive a complex treatment, a development, they can change throughout the play, but secondary characters help to focus on the center of attention. These flat characters contribute to create tension and to develop the theme, in spite of their minor presence in the play. As Marjorie Boulton says, apparently "the flatness of some of the minor characters may seem like a fault; but in good drama it is another manifestation of that essential of all great art and especially great drama, selection" (92). In drama, differently from the novel, characters are more static, they do not change much.

The playwright can use several devices to present and reveal characters, besides language itself, like costumes, accent, physical movements, marks on the body, and names that reveal traits of the characters (Griffith Jr. 48). The most important device is dialogue. In Greek and Elizabethan plays the soliloquy is also a very common device of characterization, and the aside is also helpful. A less effective way of characterization occurs when characters of the play comment on other characters. The actor also contributes to characterization with his interpretation, inflection, intonation, and facial expressions, although the present study takes in consideration only the written text and not the actual production of a play. It is important, therefore, to understand how the characters are presented and developed, what function they fulfill, what their contribution to the play as a whole is. Although language represents one of the most important instruments of characterization, determining even the "general mood" of the play, characterization must be achieved mainly through the action and reaction of the characters themselves (Esslin 39).

There is a kind of tension in drama in relation to what the character knows and what the audience knows. This tension is a very creative force that generates expectation and suspense. When the audience knows more than the characters, when characterization is circumscribed to a clear limit, the audience anticipates the actions and reactions of the character and is moved by them. When the audience knows less than the characters, tension is intensified and expectation is aroused (Esslin 73).

According to Brockett, there are four levels of characterization: 1) the physical level, which includes information about sex, age, size, race; 2) the social level, which presents the

economic status of characters, profession, trade, religion, family relations; 3) the psychological level, including the character's habitual responses, attitudes, desires, motivations, likes and dislikes, processes of mind, and display of emotion; 4) the moral level is related to the moral decisions faced by the characters, moral crises, moral qualities like selfishness, hypocrisy or honesty (37-8). Considering the limits of drama as an artistic medium, it can be said that important characters deserve complete characterization, minor characters deserve lesser. Characterization is based not only on what the main character says or does but also on what other characters say and do, as well as on information presented in the stage directions, prefaces, and other extra-textual material (Brockett 38).

Although each character fulfills a function in the plot, in the play as a whole, it is important to remember that the information about a character can be, and generally is, fragmentary, i.e., conveyed through partial and sometimes contradictory images. Brockett compares characters to words: there is a general category—types—and specific differentiation—individuation (39). Because of the artificiality of theater, the concentration of information about a character is considerable, very differently from real life, for in spite of the short duration of a play, something around two hours, it is possible to learn all that is needed about the characters. As Marjorie Boulton says: "Persons in plays are amazingly communicative" (81). And they are not only more communicative, they are also more frank about themselves, less apprehensive of self-deception than in real life (Boulton 90). Characters in a play are more concise than in real life; all the irrelevant information is left out. Boulton exemplifies it with a Greek device called *stichomythia*, composed of short-phrase dialogues, usually a question-and-answer dialogue, in which very important information is conveyed by the characters using alternating single lines, a very concise way of communication between two characters (104). Secrets, confidences, confessions are very common in drama and easily revealed (105-6). However, in spite of all the information available through the characters of the play, it is important to know that all this information given by someone in the play is relative, depending on the speaker in the situation being an enemy or a friend, having or not having intelligence and knowledge (90).

Besides characterization, another important element of a play is the structure. As already seen, Aristotle, in Chapter 6 of his **Poetics**, considers plot, the sequence of incidents, the "soul" of the play. For Aristotle, the action of a play should have a beginning, a middle, and an end (7). In addition, the action should be complete, self-contained, centered on only one organizing

principle, a logical one, convincing, with a clear purpose, so that pity and fear can be aroused. The plot of a play is developed through the dialogues among the characters, through the use of language, and is usually constituted of exposition, complication and dénouement.

In spite of the mimetic elements of drama which seem to conform the play to certain constraints of reality, the arrangement of the incidents in a play is often different and independent from historical or daily events. Even when the playwright bases his work on historical facts, his approach is different, the facts in the plot portrayed are significant, coherent, and unified (Barnet et al. 66). Two plays representing the same historical fact can have a totally different emphasis. The episodes in the play are linked by principles of causality and coherence, there is nothing gratuitous, nothing superfluous. Actions in a play have moral, logical, and materialistic consequences (67).

The structure of the Greek tragedy is composed of: 1) prologue, which contains generally an exposition; 2) the Chorus' *ode* of entrance, usually "sung while the chorus marches into the theater, through the side aisles and onto the orchestra" (Barnet et al. 81); 3) the next scene; 4) the choral song; 5) four or five scenes, alternating with odes; 6) the epilogue, which is the final scene (82). Usually, the odes have a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode. Elizabethan drama has a different structure—five acts, without a Chorus, generally. Modern and contemporary drama have also created different structures. The basic principle is: the structure of a play must make actions and conflicts clear, visible, and understandable (Boulton 38). Boulton says, in addition, that plots must be "closely constructed; that is, no time is wasted and the events follow one another in credible sequence" (42).

Since the instrument of the playwright is language, dialogue should be structured in a way that every speech establishes conflict and moves the plot forward. Martin Esslin, however, says that drama is something more than mere language. He says that what "makes drama drama is precisely the element which lies outside and beyond the words and which has to be seen as action—or *acted*—to give the author's concept its full value" (Esslin 14). For Esslin, as important as language, as the text itself, is the context, the omission, the silence, what is not said—"It is not the words that matter but the situation in which the words are uttered" (41).

A play is usually divided into acts and scenes, providing physical relief of tension for the audience, and time to set changes and to mark the plot. The structure of the play is usually centered on a main conflict, interweaved by related, minor conflicts (Esslin 45-6). Generally these conflicts are organized according to a logical or chronological principle; sometimes they are

centered on a certain character, or on a city. The last part of the plot is the resolution of the main conflict, the dénouement after the climax. The fundamental objective of the plot is to create interest and suspense in order to hold attention, to arouse expectations (Esslin 43). In order to do that, the playwright changes the rhythm of the action constantly, so that after the statement of the theme (exposition) the incidents vary continuously (44). Therefore the audience can concentrate its attention on what is going to happen next and on how the character is going to react. A good exposition in a play makes it possible for the audience to guess where the play is going, what route is going to be used, what the main expectations are. Therefore the play must have a main conflict that provides the major source of suspense, some secondary conflicts that generate secondary points of suspense, and lines full of suspense, unities of dialogue which provide several possibilities of answer to each question, statement, and gesture (47). For Brockett, the structure of a play must present a meaningful pattern, with a beginning that establishes the place, occasion, characters, mood, theme, scheme of probability, in order to arouse interest and hold attention (31-3). The exposition must contain information about earlier events, the different characters, the situation, and the point of attack (Brockett 31-3). The point of attack is defined by Brockett as "the moment at which the story is taken up," presenting for example a character who returns from a long travel, a piece of monologue, a song, a movement of dance, a question, a conflict, an *inciting incident* "that sets the main action in motion" and the theme of the play (33). A very good instrument for complicating the story is "discovery" (34), i.e., the revelation of things not previously known. The discovery of new objects, persons, facts, values, self creates tension, conflict, because of its effect upon the characters (35).

As already seen, Aristotle contributed greatly to the study of plot and coined very important terms and concepts like reversal, *peripety*, *anagnorisis*, and *catastrophe*. The resolution ties all the actions and answers the questions. Differently from modern, and from contemporary drama, Greek plays have no act and scene divisions; the action moves constantly and quickly forward, being interposed only by the songs of the Chorus (Boulton 76). The study of the structure of a play (ancient or contemporary) is fundamental in any analysis of drama, because drama is fundamentally form, a representation of incidents.

Characterization and structure work together with language, another important element in the study of drama. Aristotle puts diction, elevated verse form, as one of the basic elements of drama (**Poetics** Chapter 19). The playwright must use language that is appropriate to each character and situation, according to the scheme of probability and style of the play. In Greek

tragedy, language is always elevated and occupies a fundamental place in the structure of the play, through the use of dialogue, monologue and songs. In fact, very little happens on stage since most of Greek tragedy is dialogue and Chorus. But even in some more naturalistic modern plays dialogue is artificially constructed, concentrated, communicative, and full of significance. Language in drama is made more attractive, economical, and emotionally intense than in real life (Boulton 108-9). In lyrical drama, the use of verse is much more appropriate and characteristic. However, language does not work alone in drama; it is usually helped by some "spectacular visual effects: costume, masks, dance, spectacular architecture" that contribute to enhance the cathartic experience of theater, the moment of illumination, of communion, of consciousness (Esslin 28).

Language, embellished and handled artistically, constitutes a very useful technique in the dramatic work. Theater presents life-like experiences in a more dramatic way, selecting the most intense moments of life; and the use of poetry in drama "implies that the play is removed one step further from literal realism" (Boulton 129). Poetry is convention, conventionalized language, and therefore more effective in heightening emotion and making it more convincing (133). Even when drama is written in prose, it is usually a more elevated prose (137). In drama, language contributes to the creation of the "metaphorical world," enlarging the distance from reality, and establishing the appropriate movement, gesture, and setting (Dawson 8-9). In fact, language, the use of verse, prose, common or elevated language, constitutes an instrument the playwright has for "imposing on the actors the manner of interpretation he desires" (Esslin 34). Through the text, and the style of language itself, a kind of interpretation is suggested. Besides, through the style in which a play is written "the audience is instantly, and largely subconsciously, being made aware of how they are to take the play, what to expect from it, on what level they ought to react to it" (36). The style of language, as well as the title of the play, its author, the actors, the acting, the setting, costumes, etc, determine the expectations of the audience. But among all those elements, the level of language is the most powerful one. Martin Esslin comments that in lyrical drama "[v]erse removes the language from the everyday, familiar sphere..." (37). Poetry is richer, because of its rhythmic pattern, its musical force, and its concentration of images and symbols. Because of its effect of enhancing distancing, verse is the most appropriate kind of language in plays dealing with historical themes, distant civilisations, and remote past. And Martin Esslin presents a very good argument in its favour:

> Verse removes the necessity of having to try and achieve a completely

> convincing realistic effect. That is why modern plays dealing with history or exotic locations often tend to be in verse. (38)

However, when the author wishes, he can use contemporary language with historical characters in order to identify them with the present time, or in order to demythologise them.

Northrop Frye, in his **Anatomy of Criticism**, identifies four levels of discourse: 1) the mythic style, in which characters are identified with gods, infinitely above the audience; 2) the heroic style, in which characters are men above the audience; 3) the realistic style, in which the hero is seen as being on the same level as the common human being; 4) and the ironic mode, in which characters are looked down from above, and language then can become mechanically repetitive, exaggeratedly silly, sometimes even mock-verse can be used (33-4). The dramatist and the student of drama must be conscious of the power and of the possibilities that language provides. Stories about myths, observes Martin Esslin, like the ones present in Greek tragedy, require the elevated style of poetic language, as well as plays about kings and queens, heroic figures and superhuman beings (38). Prose is indicated in plays in which the hero is identified with the audience and the same social level is suggested (39).

In well-written plays, language helps to differentiate and develop each character according to his own style of speaking, but always in harmony with the general language style of the play as a whole (Esslin 39). Language then becomes an important instrument of characterization, cooperating with the action and reaction of the characters themselves (39). "Analyse any skilfully written play," says Esslin, "and you will find that invariably the characterisation is in the action. In drama, of course, language very often *is* action" (40). Through language, characters not only express meaningful ideas, they act and they reveal themselves.

The efficient handling of dialogue represents one of the most powerful uses of language the dramatist can dispose of. Dialogue is a helpful instrument of characterization, it usually presents "language that continually reveals character and that furthers plot" (Barnet et al. 7), conveying whether the characters are affectionate, condescending, sympathetic, antipathetic, ironic, and so on. In fact, "[d]ialogue is what the characters *do* to each other" (8). Dialogue helps the work of characterization in drama, by "the differentiation of the speech of individuals" (Boulton 108). These differences include details such as accent, the choice of words, the structure of sentences, respect for the others, explicitness, ambiguity, pedantry, pseudo-elegancies, mannerisms, slangs, professional jargon, and they indicate social rank, offensiveness, tenderness and other qualities and attitudes that differentiate some characters in relation to others (110-5).

According to Esslin's observation, language determines both the mood of the characters and the tone of the voice—if friendly, sarcastic, or menacing (16). Brockett also emphasizes the importance of language to convey mood and tone, to suggest nuances of meaning in each word, phrase, conversation, and to establish important implications, showing unspoken feelings (Brockett 26).

Besides its importance as a technique of characterization, dialogue conveys important information and carries on the plot (123). Boulton comments that dialogue is a very important device when the playwright, or the producer/director is faced with the difficulty of handling a scene that is essential to the plot but cannot be conveniently shown on the stage (59). The use of the Messenger in some Greek plays exemplifies well this circumstance (59). In Greek plays also, the most violent incidents are reported by the characters through dialogue and never acted directly on the stage. Dialogue seems to be a more appropriate device to convey such strong situations, according to the Greek decorum. So dialogue conveys important information and helps to handle difficult scenes. But the playwright can still use the soliloquy to convey the inner thoughts of characters, and the aside—when the character addresses the audience directly.

In contrast with the contemporary taste and preference for naturalistic dialogue, the soliloquy is a very important device in Greek and Elizabethan drama. As Boulton observes: "[n]owadays soliloquy is usually acceptable only in very unusual circumstances such as the portrayal of madness, or in highly experimental drama" (85).

The Chorus, mainly in Greek tragedies, represents another important theatrical device, directly connected with the general structure of the play and with language. In Aeschylean drama, the Chorus was composed of twelve elements and in Sophocles the number was fifteen. Since the Greek play has no act and scene division, the Chorus helps to organize and structure the play, intersecting songs of a varied number of stanzas. The Chorus sings in Doric, and the characters speak in Attic (a more elevated form of language). In Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the Chorus has a fundamental function, representing sometimes the *polis*, the society, the cosmic order. Sometimes the Chorus represents only part of the society, the elder men, the women, the soldiers, the sailors, commenting on the actions, lamenting the errors, suggesting attitudes, conveying emotions, invoking divinities, foreshadowing events, and even changing the plot by interacting with the characters. Aristotle observes in his **Poetics** that the Chorus should be treated as another character, as part of the plot (Chapter 18). The Chorus also influences the audience, showing the appropriate reaction, commenting, evidencing the consequences and the importance

of the action. In spite of being treated as part of the *dramatis personae*, the Chorus of the Greek tragedy contrasts with the hero of the play, representing the common team of ordinary people, always warning the hero, lamenting his obstinacy, curiously aware of all the implications of the hero's action and of the law of society (or divinity), despite the fact that the Chorus is less fully developed as a character in the context of the play (Barnet et al. 69). Although it knows more than the hero and shows more consciousness of the laws of tradition and society, the Chorus is not superior in virtue, because its obedience and moral concern are due essentially to timidity and resignation (69). This approximates the Chorus to the audience, which is emotionally affected and directed by its songs. The function of the Chorus is linked with sing-song and dance, so that the body movements and the expression of rhythm make evident the main meaning of the play. The leader of the Chorus was called *koryphaios*. It is important also to remember that tragedy was the result of the development of the Chorus' songs in praise of Dyonisus.

Tension is another important dramatic device, closely related to the structure of the play and to the complexity created by dialogue. Dialogue in itself is a source of conflict and tension (Dawson 22). All good drama, especially tragedy, should handle efficiently the arousal and the relief of tension. In the exposition of the play, generally, the audience learns the most important conflict of the story, the major fount of tension. The conflict is then in the situation, in clear relation with the expectations aroused in the beginning of the play (Dawson 29). Questions such as: What are the main conflict and the minor conflicts of the play? How are all conflicts related? Which points of tension are psychological, which are relational? How is the main conflict organized and resolved? How can a particular scene of the play contribute to the plot as a whole? are raised in the exposition. Tension is achieved then by suspense in relation to future events expected to happen as the play progresses. Tension is also achieved by the element of surprise, when new information, new characters, unexpected events bring a sort of unbalance to the play. This lack of balance, this evidence of an imperfect equilibrium, contrasts with the need and expectation of the complete action. Boulton comments that in drama, more intensely than in the novel, tension by surprise can be "more forcefully effective, since we actually see the reactions of the people to it" (57). Tension can be created by the situation itself and by the use of language. Peripety, complication (the development of the plot), and complex characterization are important elements that generate tension. Contrast helps to enhance the "emotional intensity of a play" (Boulton 56). It is possible, for example, to have in a play the contrast of a comic remark in the

face of a terrible situation like death or an accident. In this sense, tension is achieved by a lack of balance between what is said and what is happening.

The analysis of the theme of a play is another fundamental instrument in the study of drama. The theme of the play is its fundamental idea, its basic meaning. It is different from the plot itself, since the plot is the arrangement of events in the play and the theme is the moral, philosophical, and human implications of those events. This is one of the six Aristotelian elements of drama—plot, characters, diction, thought, spectacle and melody. Theme is translated as thought, and Aristotle relates it more to the fields of politics, moral, and rhetoric, to the fundamental ideas spoken by the characters and by the Chorus, by the use of soliloquies, asides or even by the use of symbols and allegories (Chapter 6). Theme also includes the dialectics of arguments, the relevance of focus, the significance of the action, the central motif or concern (Brockett 40-2). A play may present several different, sometimes opposing, themes, although it is possible to say that there is generally one which is dominant (40). Usually we have a general theme and a specific one, one that is universal and one that is individual.

Spectacle is another Aristotelian basic concept in relation to drama. It includes all visual elements like scenery and costumes. We know now that Greek plays were splendid as artistic spectacles—showing entrances of kings, retinues, chariots, priests, rituals, palaces, colourful costumes (Barnet et al. 829). This is theater as a complete experience, not limited to the script, to the written or even spoken text. Although the playwright must be conscious of theater as spectacle, it is more a formal concern, a problem of those directing the production of a play. The Greek authors did not give many suggestions, and the director/producer and actors must base their work on "deductions gained from analyzing plot, characterization, thought, and dialogue" (Brockett 48). The element of spectacle is a very helpful tool in drama because it gives information on the situation, where and when the scene occurs. Time and place are conveyed through the spectacle elements. It aids characterization, by showing social, economic differences, social classes, professions, psychological and spiritual states and traits. The spectacle also helps to establish the scheme of probability of the play, suggesting that this drama is more realistic or symbolic, dealing with supernatural elements or natural, common sensical apprehensions of reality. In addition, the spectacle helps to establish the mood and the atmosphere of the play, evidencing the seriousness of the action, form and style. As Aristotle himself advises, the spectacle runs the risk of exaggeration and therefore the dramatist should control it carefully,

assuring that it is appropriate, expressive in terms of artistic values, distinctive, and practicable (Brockett 48).

It is important to remember that each play is written to a certain audience, in order to be enacted in a certain kind of theater, on a certain type of stage (Boulton 165). There were no curtains between the stage and the audience, for example, on the Greek open-air stage; the Elizabethan stage was also characteristic, very different from the Nineteenth-century theater. Women were not accepted as actresses in the Greek ancient times; even in Shakespeare's days women could not work on the stage, an important historical limitation. The contemporary times reserve different positions to women and to actors. The attitude toward political power and institutions has also changed much since the Greeks and the Elizabethans. In Shakespeare's time the king enjoyed a respect and a participation in society which he does not today. Some dramatic conventions related to how the play should be enacted or received have also changed, sometimes the tendency is toward a spectacular, showy presentation, sometimes it is toward a more simple, crude, direct enactement. Peter Brook warns about the risk of creating what he calls a "deadly theatre," a theater made up of mere conventions, artificialities, and repetitions of old formulae (44). According to his view:

> Deadliness always brings us back to repetition: the deadly director
> uses old formulae, old methods, old jokes, old effects, stock beginnings
> to scenes, stock ends; and this applies equally to his partners, the
> designers and composers, if they do not start each time afresh from the void,
> the desert and the true question—why clothes at all, why music, what for?
> A deadly director is a director who brings no challenge to the conditioned reflexes
> that every department must contain. (Brook 44)

Every time a play is produced and enacted, the question of how the spectacle elements should be used is presented: the types of costume, the tempo of the scenes, the limits of the fictional world, the establishment of the frontier between reality and fantasy, of what is probable and what is not. The director has to have always in mind the purpose of the play he is working with, as well as all the physicalities required to express the emotions and ideas of the play, all that is visual, light, color, movement (Brook 116).

As part of the element of spectacle, costumes are very important in a play, because they help to define characterization and situation—time and place. Barnet calls our attention to the fact that costumes "do not necessarily tell the truth about their wearers, but they tell us what the wearers want us to believe" (Barnet et al. 5). In this respect, costumes are not different from statements formulated by the characters, they must be seen in perspective, as relative expressions

of limited points of view. Costumes by themselves express ideas, attitudes, feelings, desires, sometimes confirming the verbal elements of the play, sometimes contradicting them, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Certain plays, like the Greek tragedies, may constitute true challenges because of their difficulties like, for example, the case of dressing in **Oedipus the King,** as well as the setting; all the visual appearance, let us say, is problematic. How are characters dressed? How are the Chorus members supposed to be dressed? Should the director recreate the original costumes of the ancient times? Should he make up a stylized contemporary costume? A lot of research and creativity is demanded here. It is also important to remember the Greek use of masks.

Lighting is another important theatrical device. We know that the Greeks used to present their plays in the open air, using the natural light of the sun, and that the Elizabethans had serious limitations in this aspect, but we also know that since the entrance of electrical light in the theater, shadows and colors have become very complex and have contributed to enhance the central message of a play. The Greeks were not able to use artificial light in their plays, but some of their plays suggest the use of torches, bonfires, and in some scenes the thunderbolts of Zeus are in some way represented, or at least suggested by the playtext. Lighting can help very much to create the atmosphere of the play and to emphasize characterization. The use of light can enhance darkness, suggest menace, sexual threatening, fragility of the characters, human desolation, isolation, alienation or communion, always reinforcing or undermining the main point of the play. These technical devices are usually under the service of meaning, not an end in themselves. Lighting also mangnifies the effect of costumes, reinforcing colors and shades. It also helps to compose the scenery, giving depth, through the use of light and shadow, to any object placed on the stage.

Sound effect is another important element. The first basic sound of the play is made up by the voices of the actors delivering their speech, the sound of conversations, discussions, confessions, cries and laughs. In Greek plays, the Chorus contributes very much with its songs, providing variation, meditation, and emotion. Imitative noise can be produced by machines, sometimes reproducing reality, sometimes suggesting fantasy, symbols and subtle analogies like those of "footsteps on stairs, the swish and slight thud of a letter dropping into a mailbox on the door," musical soundtrack, doors being shut, cries, storms (Barnet et al. 6-7). Besides the several possible sound effects used to convey situations, actions, and ideas, there is the eloquent use of

silence, the use of pause. Boulton gives the example of some tragic heroes for whom silence was significant and expressive, like Hamlet, Macbeth and Romeo (57-8).

Intimately connected with the element of sound and the techniques of producing sound effects in drama is the use of music. Music is sound, but in a more abstract and subtle way. It contributes to enhance important points of the play. It is very useful in enriching the presentation of a play as a spectacle, helping to reach the emotional effect desired by the playwright and the director, and adding depth to the atmosphere. What differentiates music from other sound effects is that music is a complex, patterned sequence of sounds, usually harmonic, rhythmic, sometimes assonant, sometimes dissonant. Music can vibrate in the actor's voice, in the songs, through instruments or any electronic device. Music is subject to many effects and nuances, like pitch, stress, volume, tempo, duration, quality. In drama, what matters is that music serves the expressivenes of meaning, the word; it is functional, not an end in itself. Brockett enumerates seven applications that music can have: 1) it establishes or enhances the general mood of the play and helps to create expectations; 2) it helps to establish the scheme of probability; 3) it contributes to the characterization; 4) it can be a powerful medium for conveying ideas; 5) it can condense lots of action and dialogue; 6) it produces variation; 7) it gives pleasure by itself (Brockett 45-7). The Greeks used a lot of music in their tragedies, although the melodies are now lost. The Chorus was responsible for singing the songs in the play, helped by the musicians of the orchestra. And the Chorus not only used to sing but to dance according to the rhythm of the music, making some sort of choreography.

The setting of the play, enhanced by the use of scenery, is one of the most important elements of the theater as spectacle. Light, sound and costumes operate with the setting to create the atmosphere of the play and to portray and develop the characters. The scenery of the play includes all the work of carpentry and painting of the back canvas, concealing some parts of the stage, decorating, suggesting places, time, and mood. It is not so easy to speculate on the scenery used by the Greeks, but a lot of information is already available. We know that the stage of the Greek theater was itself a representation of their city, of their order, of their society so, symbolic (Barnet et al. 819). The stage was a complex building, with many specific parts and resources: the *skene* (the scene building or orchestra), the *proskenion* (the playing area in front of the skene), *periaktoi* (decorative side prisms made of cloth or screen), the *eccyclema* (a plataform used for indoor scenes), and the *mechane* (a crane from which a god could enter the stage) used in plays which included the artifice of *deus ex machina* (Barnet 818-9). The architecture of the stage has

changed very much since the Greeks and the Elizabethans, but the importance of scenery is still urgent and its use frequent. The scenery suggests a lot about the kind of characters involved in the play. Some plays use several different sets, while in others there is only one set. The Elizabethan play, for example, because of its restricted use of scenery and freedom from naturalistic obligations, indicates many different locations. The Greek play, respecting the notion of unity of place,[20] has usually only one set.[21] Each production of a play can explore the setting differently, creating various and different sceneries to represent the time and place of the play. In order to limit my study and control the objects of analysis, I will limit my investigation to the information available in the playtexts, such as dialogues, soliloquies, and songs of the Chorus.

Gestures are important devices in drama. They help, together with costumes, lighting, and sound effects, to express states of mind and relations between the actors—they are elements of the subtext. Gesture contributes to characterization. Gestures can enhance emotions, they can be stylized or more realistic, violent or tender, light or heavy. An actor can pull the ear of another to show affection, another can clap the hands friendly. Another actor can show very stylized gestures, something like in a ritual. This can be very expressive and contribute to the general meaning of the play. It is interesting to remember that, according to common knowledge and some scholars (Nietzsche, Oscar G. Brockett), Greek theater originated from a religious ritual offered to Dyonisus. Some gestures in some scenes of Greek plays are very ritualized, like in the Suppliants' wailings to king Oedipus, for example, in Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**. The importance of gesture seems to be connected with the origins of the theater. In a play, it is very important the way of walking, dancing, looking, sitting, or even lying down silently.

Intimately related to gesture are the positioning and movement of the characters on the stage, i.e., blocking. In this particular aspect, articulation is fundamental, says Esslin, and this means the distribution of the characters on the stage, colour and light, the several movements. No superfluous movement should be allowed, but only what functions as internal mark, enhancing the divisions of the play, making clear the structure (52). If action, according to Aristotle, is the

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[20] According to Barnes, "[o]f these three unities, only the last, unity of action, is Aristotelian. If a tragedy exhibits, in addition, unity of time and of place, that will be simply the accidental consequence of the fact that it represents a single action" (281).

[21] Carlinda Nuñez comments that the rule of unity of place was not always observed: "... in Aeschylus' **Eumenides** and in Euripides' **Alcestis**, just to mention two examples, the action shifts violently in space. In the first example, Orestes leaves Argos, crossing Delphus, and the second part of the play is located in Athens—a total break with the unity of space in the greatest trilogy of the Greek canon. In the second play, Heracles (the Latin Hercules) abandons the city of Alcestis and Admetus, Pheres, in Thessaly, and goes to Hades, where he does everything, before reaching his objectives (he almost forgets what he was doing there, spending a long time in a magnificent banquet). Here there

most important element of drama (**Poetics** Chapter 6-7), then all the physical movements of the play should be considered of importance, always in accordance with the central motivations, thoughts, feelings, and deeds of the play (Brockett 28). Movement serves meaning. The movement can be more naturalistic or ritualized, symbolic, depending on the nature of the play, and depending on the historical context of the play. Just as the actor uses the language of his body, the director of the play uses the language of the movements (Cameron and Gillespie 755), giving rhythm and harmony to the actors on the stage, punctuating the action and lines, conveying feelings, and creating the correct atmosphere. The speed of the movement is important, as well as the direction and the intensity of the movement (756). The tempo of the general movement must be in harmony with the tempo of the dialogues and monologues, one completing and reinforcing the other. Movement punctuates the lines, introduces speech, and it also has a symbolism that enhances the basic idea of the play (756).

Lighting, gestures, sound effects, movement are all devices the director can use to produce a play. There are many decisions he has to make alone, but he uses all the sources of information he can. The most important source of information is the text of the play itself—dialogues, soliloquies, asides, and songs, suggesting a certain interpretation. The director can use the stage directions written by the playwright. Greek plays do not have many stage directions and the director has to rely on the dialogues and songs of the Chorus, while using creativity and freedom to complete what is missing. Contemporary plays usually offer stage directions. Sometimes a character of a play can give hints about the scenes, imposing a certain perspective, a point of view through which the events are seen. Sometimes the director looks for extratextual writings, like prefaces, essays, and manifestoes, in order to find useful information on how to direct the scenes.

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is a break with the unity of space, and with the unity of action almost" (a manuscript, page 2).

Chapter II

An Analysis of Greek Tragedy

Having enlisted Aristotle's main concepts and the most important devices available for the dramatist to work with, I will analyze now three important Greek plays—Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**, Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**, and Euripides' **Medea**—, observing their confirmation or denial of Aristotle's theory and their handling of the theatrical devices, according to the conventions and technical possibilities of the time. It is important to remember that the plays are previous to the **Poetics** and, therefore, they do not have necessarily to confirm Aristotle's axioms and notions.[22] I will be referring constantly to the Aristotelian vision of tragedy, developed and clarified by contemporary scholars, and to the analysis of theatrical devices. Of course, one cannot judge classical or present-time productions by simply applying to them some artificial criteria made up by a critic of art, even by a genius like Aristotle.[23] However, one can study the dramatic production of a time, analyzing it as an artistic creation, observing its complex composition and the richness of its design. Aristotle's work represents an attempt at interpreting the phenomenon of theatre, giving a plausible explanation for their effectiveness and richness, focusing on formal features as well as on content elements, but it is not the last word about the plays. Nevertheless, considering his historical proximity to the playwrights' life (less than a hundred years) and the fact that he watched actual presentations of the tragedies, Aristotle can be viewed as a respectable source of information and evaluation.

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[23] However, it is important to take into consideration Raymond Williams's advice that Greek tragedies cannot be systematized, they are different from each other, they resist classification and unification (Williams 17). You cannot have a systematized Greek philosophy, or a Greek religion, a theology. Fate, Necessity, the Gods were not systematized items for the Greek.

[23] Carlinda Nuñez writes: "A definição aristotélica de tragédia, por isto, deve ser entendida como a descrição formal de um tipo de proposta artística que conheceu modos diferenciados de realização" (Nuñez **Electra ou uma Constelação de Sentidos** 9-10).

[A] Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**

The first play to be analyzed is Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**. The play presents the story of Prometheus, god of fire, famous for his tricks and intellectual power, as his name literally means "forethinker." He stole the fire from the gods and gave it to humankind, against the orders of Zeus, and became the master of craftsmanship, being the patron of human culture (arts and sciences), resisting Zeus' recent taking over power in Olympus. For this reason Zeus ordered that he be chained to a rock in a deep valley in a desolate and distant place of the earth. Bound to this crag, Prometheus is visited by the ancient god Oceanus, by a chorus of Oceanus' daughters, by Io (a woman with the head in the shape of a cow, another victim of Zeus), and by Hermes, son of Zeus, who insists to distill from Prometheus his secret knowledge about the future ruin of Zeus. Prometheus refuses to tell the secret, and for that reason he is cast into the underworld to be tortured. The characters of the play are: Kratos (power), **B**ia (violence), Hephaestus (Vulcan, the god of fire), Prometheus, Chorus of the Oceanides, Oceanus, Io, and Hermes.

Firstly, let us see how effectively **Prometheus Bound** works as a play, considering the several elements that constitute the theatrical devices, i. e., language, characterization, structure, dialogue, the presence of the Chorus, the creation of tension, the profundity of its themes, the richness of its spectacle, the visual and aural aspects.

The element of language, because of its importance in the play, will be analyzed first. The play as a whole is a complex arrangement of dialogues and monologues. Aeschylus uses poetic language, and sometimes its lyricism is astonishing, as in Prometheus' first soliloquy, in which he laments his condition as one unjustly punished by Zeus, a speech full of emotional intensity and melancholy: "O divine air! Breezes on swift bird-wings, / Ye river fountains, and of ocean-waves / The multitudinous laughter! Mother Earth! / And thou all-seeing circle of the sun, / Behold what I, a God, from Gods endure!" (41). The verses have a fixed meter and rhythm, without rhyme, using elevated language, alluding to many divinities, the breezes, the Mother Earth, and Zeus. There is a display of erudition in Prometheus' references to the Greek legends and myths: Cronus, the Titans, Themis, Ouranus, Gaia, and others (42). In fact, the language displayed by all the characters is in some general sense elevated. It is used to convey the main conflicts, to characterize Kratos, Hephaestus, Zeus, Prometheus and the other characters.

Thus, the dialogues in the play, in general, are very stylized, avoiding the portrayal of a common individual using the language of everyday life. They lack the hesitations and informality suposedly related to the common use of language and have an aesthetic functionality, besides communicative, pragmatic reasons. Therefore, characters can recite long breath-taking speeches in their dialogues like, for example, Kratos' 11 lines in the opening of the play and Hephaestus' 29 lines in answer. The same dialogue in the first scene of the play changes and assumes the form of *stichomythia* (in which short lines are interchanged between the participants). This device gives speed to the dialogue, attracting the attention of the audience, triggering the emotion, making the action much more dynamic.

The interchanges between Prometheus and the Chorus are marked by contrast: defiance of the gods and honor to tradition, sympathy for the suffering of Prometheus and consciousness of the moral lesson taught by the same suffering. Although the Chorus recognizes the seed of *hybris* in Prometheus' attitudes, it also acknowledges the strength of Prometheus' accusations towards Zeus. It oscillates between sympathy with Prometheus' hard sufferings and fear of his dare, his trespassing the lines of common sense. Notwithstanding, the self-pity bent of the hero is confirmed by the pitying words of the Chorus (41). In fact, the compassion of the Chorus contrasts with the callousness of Zeus, the tyrant, the new ruler of Olympus (41-2).[24]

It is important to remember that the entire characterization of Zeus is achieved through the use of language, by report and description, not directly. Zeus is absent from the play, in spite of directing Prometheus' destiny, of sending Kratos, Bias and Ephaestus, of violating Io and sending Hermes to give Prometheus an ultimatum. Prometheus and the Chorus talk about Zeus' attitudes using political terms, as if the question of change of power were not religious but essentially political: "triumph," "subjugate," "monarchize," "the president of heaven," "parliament," "conspiracy," "sceptre," "kingly seat" (41-2).[25]

Prometheus recognizes, in his dialogue with the Chorus, that speech is a painful experience, although silence may be painful as well—"These things are sorrowful for me to

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[24] In fact, Aeschylus' Zeus in **Prometheus Bound**, the cruel enemy of men's freedom, is in contradiction with the Zeus of justice (Schüler **Literatura Grega** 101).

[25] "O Zeus do **Prometeu Agrilhoado** é a figura do moderno tirano, tal qual imagina a época de Harmódio e Aristogíton. O próprio Agamemnon de Ésquilo se comporta de modo totalmente diverso do Agamemnon de Homero. É um filho genuíno do tempo da religião e da ética de Delfos, constantemente perturbado pelo medo de,

speak, / Yet silence too is sorrow: all ways woe!" (42). Yet, when Prometheus is about to tell Io about her future, the Chorus comments on the curative power of the spoken word—"There is a kind of balm to the sick soul / In certain knowledge of the grief to come" (47). Io's narrative also causes her pain, which evinces the power of the spoken word, the power of narrative to revive the past and alter the present—"the telling of it / Harrows my soul; this winter's tale of wrong" (46).

Another interesting aspect linked to the use of language is Prometheus' capacity for narrating. He is able to reorganize and give a reasonable account of past events, and this means that he is able to determine his own individuality and personality. This is what he does in the beginning, when he explains to the Chorus the causes of his suffering, why he was punished that way. He can recollect the past:

> For boons bestowed
> On mortal men I am straitened in these bonds.
> I sought the fount of fire in hollow reed
> Hid privily, a measureless resource
> For man, and mighty teacher of all arts.
> This is the crime that I must expiate
> Hung here in chains, nailed 'neath the open sky. Ha! Ha! (41)

With emotion and consciousness, Prometheus can narrate his own story. But more than that, he is able to verbalize and anticipate what is to come, projecting himself into the future, defining his own identity; he has a project. And more than that, Prometheus helps Io to understand her own past and to anticipate her own future, in details, much more clearly than the oracles of the gods, as he helped the human race in a very practical and relevant way. Besides, the same power used to reveal Io's future is denied in relation to Zeus who sends Hermes in his place. Prometheus, suppressing his language, by his silence, determines the life of Zeus, limiting his power.

Dialogue is fundamental in the play, helping characterization and the presentation of conflict, like in the open contact between Prometheus and Oceanus. Oceanus honestly confronts Prometheus: "A wanton, idle tongue brings chastisement" (43) and Prometheus answers him frankly, although with respect and friendliness. The dialogue between them varies in extension, 33 lines and 40 lines respectively of elevated language, with much information, allusions to mythological figures like Atlas, Typhon, and places like the Cilician dens (43).

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como vencedor, na plenitude da força e da ventura, incorrer na *hybris*" (Jaeger **Paidéia** 298).

The dialogue between Io and Prometheus is exceedingly developed and complex (45-9). First, Io's language is the most intense in terms of torment and suffering, even more than Prometheus', maybe because she is less conscious of the causes of her suffering, she knows less about her redemption, she acted less freely, in contrast with Prometheus, who acted according to his free will. She is mad and disturbed by her agony. And all that becomes evident in her language, in the excess of interjections and exclamations like "Ha! Ha!" (45), "O earth, earth" (45), "See! See!" (46), "List! List! the pipe! how drowzily it shrills!" (45), "A cricket-cry!" (46), "Again the prick, the stab of gadfly-sting!" (45). Differently from Prometheus, Io is a victim of the gods, without having committed any act of *hamartia*. Like him, she indulges herself in self-pity and lamentations: "Sorrow with me, / Sorrowful one!" (46). Io's lines are different from all others in the play, even in the extension and rhythm. So, while Prometheus says with regular lines: "How should I hear thee not? Thou art the child / Of Inachus, dazed with the dizzying fly" (46); Io uses a long line followed by a short line:

> How dost thou know my father's name? Impart
> To one like thee
> A poor, distressful creature, who thou art.
> Sorrow with me. (46)

The diction of Io's dialogue is also characteristic, with words that describe her mental and physical condition of exhaustion:

> Sick! Sick! ye Gods, with suffering ye have sent,
> That clings and clings;
> Wasting my lamp of life till it be spent!
> Crazed with your stings! (46)

In her dialogue with Prometheus, Io is capable of very long speeches; some are 48 lines long (45-6), and some are 66 lines long (46-7). The speed accelerates when Io interacts with Prometheus using *stichomythia*. The expectation of the audience concerning their future obviously increases. Thus, this dialogue is very important for conveying necessary information, confirming Zeus' bad temper, Prometheus' virtues and stubbornness, Io's identity and future, and for foreshadowing the future fall of Zeus (48). Zeus' future disgrace through the irony of a "marriage" seems to be the overcoming of Prometheus' and Io's tragic suffering, because it conveys a certain kind of hope that justice, one day, will be done, and the tyrant will be supplanted.

There is a short dialogue in the play, just after Io's exit, which is very important in terms of function. As the Chorus meditates on Io's disgrace and the fact that it was her beauty which had attracted the attention of the gods, it changes its emphasis, from pity for Io's and Prometheus' condition to sincere and clear fear for its own destiny. This change gives the opportunity for the audience to experience fear and achieve *catharsis*, and offers a moral lesson:

> True marriage is the union that mates
> Equal with equal; not where wealth emasculates,
> Or mighty lineage is magnified,
> Should he who earns his bread look for a bride. (49)

The lesson seems quite evident: do not mix in marriage people from different social backgrounds, and respect the limits imposed by divinities, never intend to be like the gods. It is a warning against the risks of *hybris* which awakes the jealousy of the gods, and their *nemesis*.[26] This attitude of the Chorus highlights Prometheus' resolution of resisting the power and menaces of Zeus. This contrast helps to characterize Prometheus as well as the Chorus.

Characterization, the next element to be analyzed, is provided by the use of language—monologue and dialogue—, as well as by the costumes and other visual aids. Characters are always commenting on one another, judging their deeds, reporting their words, reacting to their attitudes. Even characters that do not enter the stage, like Zeus, are developed through the characters that appear on stage. Indeed, Zeus is the most referred to character in the play. The audience knew Zeus already, as the king of the gods, abiding in the Olympus, according to their mythological tradition and to their poets. There is, however, a difference between the view of Zeus according to tradition and the view of him as presented by Aeschylus in **Prometheus Bound**, a tyrannical god who achieves power through violence. In the opening of the play, Hephaestus recognizes Zeus' tendency to abuse power—"Zeus is hard to be entreated, / As new-born power is ever pitiless" (40). Prometheus also calls Zeus a "tyrant" (41). The Chorus also recognizes Zeus' lack of mercy: "not by prayer to Zeus is access won; / An unpersuadable heart hath Cronos' son" (42). In answer, Prometheus accuses Zeus of manipulating justice according to

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[26] "Here we see the tragic hero as disturbing a balance in nature, nature being conceived as an order stretching over two kingdoms of the visible and the invisible, a balance which sooner or later must right itself. The righting of the balance is what the Greeks called *nemesis*: again, the agent or instrument of *nemesis* may be human vengeance, ghostly vengeance, divine vengeance, divine justice, accident, fate or the logic of events, but the essential thing is that *nemesis* happens, and happens impersonally, unaffected, as **Oedipus Tyrannus** illustrates, by the moral quality of human motivation involved" (Frye 209).

his own interests, of not tempering it with mercy. But Prometheus develops the characterization of Zeus in foreseeing his doom, the next change of power in Olympus, when his wrath would be "smoothed quite away" (42).

Prometheus' ability to foresee the future gives Aeschylus the opportunity to evidence another trait of Zeus' character: his power is limited by Necessity, for even the supreme god has to accept the decrees of Fate. This perception is full of political implications, since it asserts that there is no absolute power under (or even over) the sun. Zeus reveals his own concern about his future as the ruler of the gods by sending Hermes to ask for Prometheus' revelation (50). Thus, Zeus is not omniscient; besides Fate, ignorance also limits his power. The arrival of Io completes the characterization of Zeus as someone seduced by the beauty of a mortal woman. He is now shown as controlled by a strong passion (46). Zeus is also the one who is under the fury of his wife, Hera. In spite of all his power, he cannot control either his passion for a woman or the wrath of his own wife.

The characterization of Prometheus is also well achieved. At the beginning of the play he is bound to the rocks, and at the end of the play he is thrown down under the rocks.[27] Throughout the play, Prometheus is physically marked by his immobility, being first carried by Kratos and Bia and then locked in "bonds of brass" by Hephaestus (40). The only thing he can do, and he does, is to speak a lot, and protest, and lament, and curse, and foretell the future of Zeus, of Io, and of himself. The setting also helps to characterize Prometheus as an isolated hero, condemned to solitude, silence and the wilderness. The setting reflects Prometheus' motionlessness.

Prometheus is explicitly portrayed, in the dialogue between Kratos and Hephaestus, as the offender of the gods, the one who chose to help the humans and disobey the gods. Hephaestus calls him a "brother God," recalling Prometheus' divine nature, characterizing him as one beyond the mortal condition and showing sympathy before Prometheus' great punishment, helping to characterize him nailed to the crags "where no wight dwells, / Nor sound of human voice nor shape of man / Shall visit" (40). Prometheus' *hamartia* is directly linked to humankind, so is his punishment related to isolation from any human contact.[28] Hephaestus also describes how the

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[27] Albin Lesky (96) and Jan Kott (Introduction xv) suggest that Prometheus was thrown into Tartarus, a place of torture and suffering located in the underworld.

[28] Notwithstanding, it is important to quote Raymond Williams's statement that in classical Greek tragedy you do not have the isolation of the hero (Williams 18). "This is a choral tragedy," a collective experience, presupposing the

physical suffering would alter Prometheus' body, the sun-blaze that would roast his flesh, the losing of his "flower-fair" (40). Prometheus' silence in this first scene is eloquent and helps to characterize him as the innocent victim of the violence of the gods. Only when they leave the scene is Prometheus able to lament his destiny, revealing his soul in a long soliloquy. He is able to grieve for himself; the hero—something recurrent in Greek tragedy—is someone who can plunge into the sea of self-pity.

Prometheus' suffering is marked by a keen consciousness of his own situation, of its causes, and by the consciousness of the future. Although he knows that both suffering and deliverance will come, his suffering becomes even more unbearable, something that cannot be remedied just with silence or words (41). He is conscious of the *hamartia* that brought him disgrace, his gift of fire to "mortal men" (41), providing great technological development to humankind, and he also knows that the punishment is too big for such a minor sin, in fact for such a good deed. Prometheus' qualities are his very defects. But the soliloquy also reveals his stubbornness, his insistence in resisting Zeus' new achieved authority, refusing to cooperate with Zeus and reveal his final doom.

The Chorus helps to characterize Prometheus' courageous resistance to Zeus, commenting on his bold attitude in facing Zeus' wrath, confirming Prometheus' stubbornness, and pitying his extreme suffering. As the Chorus listens, Prometheus' ability to narrate his own story and the story of his family helps to mark him as someone articulate and therefore able to control his own destiny (42). He enumerates several services and gifts bestowed on humankind, like the salvation from Zeus' destruction, the cure for several maladies, the elimination of the "expectancy of death," the insertion of hope in the human heart, and the gift of fire (43). Part of the dialogue is in *stichomythia*, moving quickly and intensely, finishing with Prometheus affirming clearly his freedom of choice—"Of my free will, my own free will, I erred, / And freely do I here acknowledge it" (42). Thus, Prometheus is distinguished not only by his consciousness, but also by freedom.

The visit of Oceanus and the dialogue which follows help to characterize Prometheus by contrast. Oceanus' willingness to help Prometheus makes evident the hopelessness of

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centrality of human social and metaphysical linkage. As the Greek culture changed, as its "structure of feeling" (dramatized tension-resolution) changed, the meaning of tragedy also changed, the chorus weakened (18).

Prometheus' situation and the stiff-heartedness of Zeus (43). Oceanus' mobility also contrasts with Prometheus' immobility. Oceanus' respect for Prometheus also illustrates his high rank as a hero, as someone good and respectful (43). Besides, Oceanus' insistence on advising Prometheus to accept the new order established by Zeus contrasts with Prometheus' insistent revolt and enhances his autonomy before the sovereign god. Oceanus' compromising words also contrast with Prometheus' sharp language, his proud verbal defiance (43). Oceanus is fear, Prometheus is dare; Oceanus is compromise, Prometheus is vengeance; Oceanus is, amazingly, calm, Prometheus is anger; Oceanus is sweetness, Prometheus is bitterness; Oceanus is reverence towards Zeus and towards divine power, Prometheus is insolence. Oceanus advises Prometheus against the reproachful attitude of Biblical pride—"Keep a quiet mind / And use not over-vehemence of speech— / Knowest thou not, being exceeding wise, / A wanton, idle tongue brings chastisement?" (43)—; but it is precisely this attitude that distinguishes the hero as someone different from the common people.

Oceanus evinces Prometheus' *hybris*—,triggering Zeus' wrath. He tries to advise Prometheus not to bring more suffering by uttering bad words, like a madman who "kick[s] against the pricks" (43). Prometheus, however, rejects Oceanus' friendly and generous help. Their dialogue also moves from long speeches in the beginning to rapid interactive lines in *stichomythia* (44). And Oceanus moves from pity towards Prometheus to an attempted advice to help him. Interestingly, Prometheus portrays ambiguous attitudes of requesting pity and rejecting any help from Oceanus.

After Oceanus' departure, the Chorus comes and laments Prometheus' fate, crying and making libations, alluding to many who suffer with sympathy because of Prometheus' suffering. Indeed, all humankind and the elements of nature (the sea and the mountains) are invited to sing a sad song in solidarity to the hero's pain (44). In answer, Prometheus plunges into a stream of self-pity and reminds the Chorus, through several details and images, of his work for the benefit of humankind, giving them knowledge, light, "sense," helping them to make "brick-built dwellings," teaching them the ability to count, the ability to write, to domesticate animals, to build ships and conquer the sea (44). He perceives the paradox of being able to help humankind with several inventions and being unable to help himself. This is the contradiction of the hero, making of him an enigmatic figure. In a parallel with Oceanus, the Chorus can perceive in

Prometheus' words the seeds of *hybris*, the shooting "beyond the mark" (45).[29] The Chorus, then, in dread, starts praying to the gods so that the same disgrace cannot fall over them. It changes from pity to fear of commiting any *hamartia* against sacred things and bringing upon them the *nemesis* of the gods (45). Like Oceanus before, the Chorus has something to learn from Prometheus' disgrace—"These things I learned seeing thy glory dimmed, / Prometheus" (45).

The entrance of Io full of agitation and the dialogue she has with Prometheus helps to delineate him even more clearly, by contrast. He is the absolute immobility, she is the absolute agitation; he is the absolute knowledge, she is the complete lack of sense; he is totally responsible for his doom because of his *hamartia* and his *hybris*, she is completely innocent; Prometheus' situation is tragic, Io's is pathetic. Nevertheless, both suffer over-punishment, both lament and call for pity; both have their pain linked with the ominous figure of Zeus. Io is a "crack-brained lack-wit, frantic mad" creature, tormented by the hundred-eye-monster Argus (45) and by the stings of the "buzzing" Furies.[30] Her language, flowing like a speedy fountain, illustrates her suffering, interweaved with crying and awe, and marked by exclamation points. Io undertakes a pilgrimage with no aim, chasing a "vanishing goal," while Prometheus is condemned to fixity (45-6). In her intense lament, Io makes evident another difference between her and Prometheus: she thinks it would be better to die, because she is a mortal being. Prometheus is unable to die, he is a god, and his suffering cannot be alleviated by death (48).

Thus, Io's presence in the play is very functional, helping to characterize Prometheus by contrast, but also providing the opportunity for thematic concerns. Before Prometheus answers her questions, there is an intense *stichomythia* between them in which she formulates the fundamental question of the tragedy, the question about the meaning of his suffering: "why art thou punished thus?" (46). Before Prometheus utters his oracular words about Io's future, Io narrates her own story of how her beauty seduced Zeus and how she was transformed into deformity by Hera, Zeus' wife (47). The Chorus is horrified and compassionate by her narrative, showing at the same time fear and pity: "Off! lost one! off! Horror, I cry! / Horror and misery," and "A sight so ill to look upon! Ah me! / Sorrow, defilement, haunting fear" (47). In satisfying

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[29] "O que, de fato, as peças [tragédias gregas] tematizam é a ultrapassagem do homem, de sua condição meramente mortal, à condição de herói digno de ser encarnado por um ator e servir de exemplo por suas ações" (Nuñez 29).

[30] Sartre also resorted to flies as symbol of the Furies in his retelling of the myth of Orestes and Electra—**Les Mouches**—, in a clear demonstration of the everlasting presence of Greek culture in the Western world.

Io's desire for knowledge about her destiny, Prometheus alludes to several geographical and mythological places and figures, thus displaying a vast knowledge of the human world and culture. Prometheus' clear advices contrast with the ambiguous oracles she had received from Loxias (Apolo) (47).

The most important information Prometheus gives is related to the fall of Zeus, through Zeus' own vain passions and through a descendant of Io, Epaphus, the "touch-born" (49). This is the irony of the situation: Prometheus is bound to the rocks, condemned by Zeus, but only he can save Zeus from his doom. And this is the overcoming of tragedy, the vision of the redeemer, the sight of salvation through the birth of a hero. Prometheus' doom is not final, there is an open door in the future, and Io helps to evidence this aspect of the plot.

The fearfulness of the Chorus also helps to make evident the fearlessness of Prometheus. After Io's exit, when Prometheus prophesies about the fall of Zeus and the arrival of a supplanter, the Chorus shivers in terror and asks Prometheus: "Hast thou no fear venting such blasphemy?" (50). And Prometheus answers: "What should I fear...?" (50). The Chorus' submission to the forces of Necessity, considered a form of wisdom contrasts with Prometheus' autonomous and clear disposition to retain his dignity: "Go thou and worship; fold thy hands in prayer, / And be the dog that licks the foot of power! / Nothing care I for Zeus; yea, less than naught" (50).

We can devise in the play characters who are types, and characters who are more developed and present some sort of evolution. Prometheus does not show a change in essence, but his personality is presented step by step through the other characters and through his own attitudes. He could have accepted several suggestions of change, but he chose to remain unchanged in his fundamental rebellion against Zeus. Prometheus is also individualized by his language, daring and consistent with his character. Kratos, on the contrary, represents clearly a type—the obedient, violent servant of Zeus, being there only to contrast with Prometheus' autonomy.

As the story of Prometheus was already well known to the public, the dramatist could not rely on surprise in order to create tension. On the other hand, the point of attack could be late and exposition could be short. **Prometheus Bound** starts with the hero being chained to the rocks, having already violated Zeus' order and established a crisis in Olympus. The main conflict (that

between Prometheus and Zeus) and the minor conflicts (those involved in Hephaestus' hesitation in binding Prometheus to the rocks, for example) are presented. The exposition also conveys the intensity of Prometheus' suffering, his immobility and loneliness, and is followed by the several visits Prometheus receives in his tortured condition in the crags. The complications appear in Prometheus' refusal of Oceanus' intercession, in the revelation of a future redeemer of Prometheus' pains and avenger of Zeus' tyranny, in the refusal to accept the Chorus' advices to submit to Zeus' sovereignity, and in Prometheus' persuasion of the Chorus to stay with him and resist Zeus' despotic intentions.

The play follows a progressive order, and the climax coincides with the final scene, in the visit of Hermes and Prometheus' rejection of salvation and his final punishment in a spectacular, noisy fall into the abyss. Thus we could divide the play into three major parts: the binding of the hero to the rocks, the visits, and the final doom of the hero.

Another important element of the structure of the play is the constant reference to past and future events. Prometheus foreshadows his liberation, altering the absoluteness of his suffering and of Zeus' sovereignity. There is a relativization of power and a relativization of destiny, of the tragic suffering. And this foreshadowing is not an insignificant detail, but a very important point in the play, since it is reaffirmed. Zeus is going to change his violent mood into a more smooth one, mildly speaking of "peace and amity" (42).

Cohesion is a visible characteristic of the play; it is centred on only one character, Prometheus, and on one conflict only, Prometheus' relation with Zeus and his punishment because of his excess of love of humankind and denial to surrender to Zeus' blackmailing. The action is also coherent—all the visitors arrive between Prometheus' being bound to the rocks and being buried under the rocks. No action is accidental, although there is the coincidence of the Chorus', Oceanus', and Io's arrival in that place, something very common in theatre. As Prometheus' punishment is linked with his offense to the god's interests, so is Io's suffering linked with Zeus' tyranny. Nevertheless, there is a sense of lack of balance between the kind of mistake committed by Prometheus and the absurd cruelty of his punishment. Certainly the human beings' advances could not represent any serious menace to the sovereignty of Zeus, and Prometheus obviously did not deserve such a hard chastisement. But this lack of balance helps to convey and reinforce the tragic effect, triggering pity for the hero and fear. Cause and

consequence determine the structure of the play, so that even when the final doom of Prometheus comes, we feel prepared for it, accepting it as logical, due to the nature of Zeus and Prometheus and to the hints foreshadowed. The order of the events is chronological, without flash-backs or flash-forwards. The unity of time is respected in the play, as common in Greek tragedies, limiting the time span to a certain amount of hours. However, the presence of eternity is always there, through the Olympus, the timelessness of Zeus, and the perpetuity of Hell.

The Chorus has a very important function in this play, conveying pity for the hero and for Io's suffering, giving Prometheus some advice, showing fear, moralizing on the conflict between Prometheus and Zeus, lamenting, interacting with the characters, helping to characterize them, and contrasting with Prometheus' courage and knowledge. It also links the sequence of different scenes, affecting the audience emotionally and morally. The Chorus also presents music and dance, adding to the play's appeal. Due to the number of its participants, it occupies a considerable extension of the stage, causing a visual and physical impact. It also allows some sort of variation, moving between different poles: from pity to fear, from fear to pity, from hesitation to decision, from prudence to honor.

Tension is another very important element of drama, and a very subtle element of Greek tragedy. As the myth is well known, each dramatist shows a different approach.[31] Tension does not depend on the myth itself, but it is part of the "narrative" (if we can apply this term very loosely to the dramatic plot). In **Prometheus** tension depends on the sequence of events—how the main and the minor conflicts are organized and intertwined in the play. Kratos' pressure on Hephaestus and Hephaestus' hesitation in obeying the order of Zeus represent minor conflicts soon resolved in the same scene. But the first dialogue is successful in presenting the main conflict, the source of a major tension—that between Zeus and Prometheus. How will Prometheus react toward this hard punishment? With Oceanus' arrival and his offer of being an intercessor unto Zeus in favor of Prometheus, another tension arises: will Prometheus accept Oceanus' offer? (43-4). Each new character brings new sources of tension. With Hermes' arrival, it becomes clear that Prometheus' fortune is going to be decided, the tension is hightened, the

[31] "A tragédia, entretanto, assume um distanciamento em relação aos mitos de heróis em que se inspira e que transpõe com muita liberdade. Questiona-os. Confronta os valores heróicos, as representações religiosas antigas com os novos modos de pensamento que marcam o advento do direito no quadro da cidade" (Vernant e Vidal-Naquet **Mito e Tragédia na Grécia Antiga** 14).

emotion intense: is Prometheus going to reveal the secret that would save Zeus from disgrace and himself from his doom? Is he going to cooperate and confess what he knows? Here, I think, is the climax of the play in terms of tension—something terrible is going to happen to Prometheus, it is inevitable, it is going to happen very soon. The last scene of the play shows the dénouement; the tension is released by a dramatic scene: Prometheus and the Chorus are thrown into the abyss. (51).

What are the themes developed in **Prometheus Bound**? There are many possibilities. The play shows human progress, culture, science, political independence, knowledge, technology, in contrast with the ancient world in which everything was controlled by the gods.[32] The theme of tyranny is also developed by the play, for Zeus is portrayed as a tyrannical god who conquered the kingship by the use of force and abuses it in punishing all his opponents. As we know, Zeus usurped the throne from his own father, Chronus. Prometheus evinces the unjust character of Zeus' intentions. The play also reveals a certain tension in the Greek world between the religious and the secular perceptions of reality. The play seems to reveal also a discussion, probably current in the Greek society of the time,[33] about the legitimacy of government by the use of force and not by respect and faithfulness. We can perceive in **Prometheus Bound** the theme of the dignity of the individual in face of suffering and pain, the affirmation of the individual based on his own being, and not on the confirmation of a divine being, an external power that can justify life and death. Although Prometheus is above the condition of the mortal beings, he is under the control of Zeus and cannot escape from the hands of destiny, represented by Zeus' tyrannical power. The play also portrays the risks of *hybris*, the risks of being too much self-centered, of losing sight of the opinions of the others. In spite of all his knowledge and prophetic powers, Prometheus seems to suffer from a certain blindness, a stubborn attitude that hinders him from accepting suggestions, or changing opinions, or admitting mistakes. The play is highly dialectic, moving between opposites: freedom and destiny, freewill and fate, individuality and the general nature of things, possibility and necessity, wish and reality.

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[32] In fact, the myth of Prometheus as a hero would recur frequently in the universal literature, like in the figure of Faust, for example, a theme developed by Christopher Marlowe, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and Thomas Mann.

[33] According to Jakob Bachofen's interpretation, in Aeschylus, we have a contrast between two different views of society, the ancient past and the new state. As Junito Brandão says: "A busca da conciliação é uma constante no

Although the long temporal distance between us and the Greek plays makes it difficult to know with certainty how the plays were interpreted and produced and in spite of the lack of any stage direction that could help us imagine the visual richness of the play, the text suggests a minimal range of visual and aural effects that are very important and help to convey the total effect of the play. These visual and aural effects include the scenery suggested by the setting, the costumes, the cries and especial sounds, natural and supernatural phenomena, music, dance, gestures, hence performance.

The costumes are very important for characterization.[34] Those of Kratos, Bia, Hephaestus, and Prometheus should provide the audience with visual hints to distinguish them individually and as quickly as possible. Their costumes should also convey something of their divine nature, their power. The Chorus is composed of the daughters of Oceanus, supernatural beings and are called by Prometheus "Fair progeny" of Tethys (41). Although the text does not present details about their dress, the Chorus makes reference to their "sandal shoe[s]" (41). Oceanus arrives riding a monster, probably using his trident, thus an imponent figure suggesting an appropriate dress. Io is described as being "cow-horned" (46), suggesting that she should be wearing a characteristic costume, with something on her head. She is also completely insane, which makes us suspect that her dress and her hair are untidy. Yet we cannot forget that in the Greek theatre actors used masks and were all men, which reinforces its stylized character.[35]

Sound and visual effects abound in this play, mainly in the entrance and exit of characters. Kratos, Bia and Hephaestus' entrance, for example, carrying the "gigantic" figure of Prometheus should be impressive by itself, and the sound of Kratos' orders, the cries, the sound of the hammer, nails and chains should vibrate in the air, contrasting with Prometheus' silence in the first scene (40). The same scene suggests not only sound effect, the sound of the hammer, but the physicality of the action, the gestures, the movement of the bodies, the actors contorting, twisting,

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teatro esquiliano" (Bachofen *apud* Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 26).

[34] "Distingui-se, todavia, a idumentária trágica pela suntuosidade e riqueza dos bordados: arabescos, ramagens, espirais, estrelas, figuras humanas e animais. Suntuosos e ricos, orientalizados no gosto dos bordados e do colorido, ouro, púrpura, o esverdeado, o cinza, possuíam os mantos grandes mangas à maneira oriental e caíam até os pés. A cintura não apertava nos quadris, mas no peito: a finalidade destes últimos artifícios era aumentar a estatura e a majestade da personagem" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Origem e Evolução** 57).

[35] Masks, so important in the Greek tragedy, "escondem o homem que fala por detrás delas; tornam exterior a caveira que se abriga no interior do corpo; impõem aparência inorgânica ao rosto orgânico" (Nuñez "O Teatro Grego" 25).

getting down and standing up, in a word, the language of the body. And Kratos orders Hephaestus to drive his "iron spike" in Prometheus' body "Until it gnaw clean through the rebel's breast" (40) and "cast a ring-bolt round [Prometheus'] legs" (41), which is skillfully done. And he continues ordering: "Now with a sound rap knock the bolt-pins home! / For heavy-handed is thy task-master" (41). All these acts involve the production of characteristic, special sounds and a lot of physical movement, agitation, cries of pain and effort, besides the hard tongue of Kratos.

Even Prometheus' silence functions as a sound effect, being very eloquent and meaningful.[36] When Kratos, Bia, and Hephaestus finish their task and exit the stage, Prometheus speaks and the audience is full of expectations about what he has to say. The voice of Prometheus fills the air and resounds in the wilderness, contrasting with the deep silence around—"Ha! Ha! / What echo, what odour floats by with no sound?" (41). In this precise moment there is no external sound, only the voice of Prometheus in his touching lament. Then a sound echoes in the air, and Prometheus recognizes it as similar to the sound of "great birds of prey" (41), fanning the air, the sound of "Whistles," "shrills" and beats of wings (41). We may suppose that this sound resounded on the stage, through some artifice, or that Prometheus' words would convey its impression.

The Chorus of the Oceanides coming onto the orchestra suggests a sophisticated visual effect, because the Chorus is suposed to arrive through the air, in a winged chariot (41). It must be a challenge to any director, even today, requiring a complex machinery, as the *mekanê* the Greeks knew. The Chorus says it comes in peace "[o]n wings of speed to mountain lone" bringing a "fresh breeze," attracted by the noises of "iron raught" (41). The music and the dance of the Chorus create other important sound and visual effects, adding to their lyrical and emotional aura. The choreography of the Chorus (in the air), in harmony with the music, helps to complete the wide range of artistic experiences intended by the theatre. The coming of the Chorus to the ground offers another impressive visual effect, coinciding with the arrival of Oceanus, riding a sea monster (43). This entrance constitutes a very complex device, something that requires ability and experience.

When Oceanus exits the stage, visual and aural devices, as well as a lot of physical movement, are again of great importance: the cries of Prometheus, the restlessness of the dragon,

[36] Aeschylus' use of silence is alluded to and condemned by Euripides in Aristophanes' **The Frogs**.

the general agitation (44). After this impressive scene of Oceanus' exit, the Chorus fills the air with a long and sad song of lament pitying Prometheus' condition, invoking all the land inhabitants, alluding to the myriads who dwell in Schythia, to the Maeotian lake, the stocks of Ares and the mountaineers of Caucasus. Considering the solemnity of the language and the richness of the allusions, we can imagine the Oceanides as bearing "libations for [Prometheus'] fortune" (44), in tears, with groans, in a mournful rhythm. The choreography here could well approximate to a funeral requiem, solemn, slow, contrite.

Another important scene, in terms of visual and aural effect, is the entrance of Io on stage, "crazed and horned" (45). Her clothes and her movements suggest affliction. Her deformity represents another challenge for the direction, the portrayal of a beautiful woman tortured up to madness by supernatural entities, the gadfly-stings. These visual devices cooperate with the sounds that Io produces, her strong cries, her exclamations, words of despair and suffering. Io's physical moves are of great importance to convey her lack of consciousness and her uneasiness:

> Famished I come with trampling and with leaping,
> Torment and shame,
> To Hera's cruel wrath, her craft unsleeping,
> Captive and tame
> Off all wights woe-begone and fortune-crossed,
> Oh, in the storm
> Of the world's sorrow. (46)

Sometimes, Io's speech becomes simply a strong cry of emotion, and resounding: "Alas! Oh! Oh!" (47). Of course, Io's exit of the stage constitutes another scene full of visual and aural appeal, as her last words suggest:

> Again they come, again
> The fury and the pain!
> The gangrened wound!
> The ache of pulses dinned
> With raging throes
> It beats upon my brain-the burning wind
> That madness blows!
> It pricks-the barb, the hook not forged with heat,
> The gadfly dart!
> Against my ribs with thud of trampling feet
> Hammers my heart! (49)

Of course, Io's suffering can be seen as basically psychological, mental, but her words suggest a physical pain, attracting the attention of the audience and convincing them of her authenticity. Here the sound effect together with the visual, physical effect is of fundamental importance, emphasizing all the emotional suffering and mental delirium of Io.

The last scene of the play presents the most intense amount of visual, physical and aural devices. Prometheus is finally doomed and thrown into the abyss, as he himself foretold just some minutes before, with lightning leaping "smoke and flame, / And all that is be beat and tossed together, / With whirl of feathery snowflakes and loud crack / Of subterranean thunder" (50). Obviously, the representation of an earthquake is hard to be reproduced with machinery, even today. Most probably, things were implied and suggested by language. However, the physical movement on the stage and the sounds of cries and thunders made by drums and horns was something possible to achieve. Hermes presents more details of Prometheus' final doom: "This rocky chasm shall the Father split / With earthquake thunder and his burning bolt, / And he shall hide thy form, and thou shalt hang / Bolt upright, dandle in the rock's rude arms" (51). The intensity of the physical movement is evident. The use of some sort of machinery was also possible and probable, although light effects were totally out of question, impossible at the time, considering the technological limitations and the open-air presentations. Prometheus' last words express the actuality of his final doom:

> earth quakes
> Sensibly: hark! pent thunder rakes
> The depths, with bellowing din
> Of echoes rolling ever nigher:
> Lightnings shake out their locks of fire;
> The dust cones dance and spin;
> The skipping winds, as if possessed
> By faction-north, south, east and west,
> Puff at each other; sea
> And sky are shook together: Lo... (51)

Prometheus cries: "See, see, / Earth, awful Mother! Air, / That shedd'st from the revolving sky / On all the light they see thee by, / What bitter wrongs I bear!" (51). Of course, the detailed language seems to compensate for the technical limitations, but the gestures of the actors, the tone and volume of their voice, the choreography of the Chorus, the cries of agony and other sound effects reinforce the words of Prometheus and complete the magic experience of the theatre.

Applying Aristotle's theory of tragedy to this play by Aeschylus, we can see many elements that fit it. The first element that calls our attention is the protagonist of the play who, according to Aristotle's theory, should be noble, renowned, and prosperous; Prometheus fits these characteristics. One thing, however, seems not to fit entirely Aristotle's theory: Prometheus is more like a god than a man, he is much nearer Olympus than the earth, although a humanized god, in conflict with his companions, under the power of fate and destiny. Among Prometheus' virtues I include love of humankind, knowledge about the future, intelligence, and a strong will.

The Aristotelian notion of *mimesis* as representation can also be perceived here.[37] Aeschylus uses as source of his play a very known myth, present in Homeric literature. However, he does not present a mere copy of the tradition, he recreates the story, emphasizing some elements, changing others.[38] Zeus, for example, presented by Homer as a benign and generous god, is portrayed by Aeschylus as a tyrannical god whose main characteristics are power thirst and violence.

Prometheus, the hero of the play, is not perfect, but he is good. According to Aristotle, the tragic hero makes a serious mistake, and Prometheus has committed a *hamartia*: he stole the fire of a god (of Hephaestus) and shared it as a gift with mortals. This was his mistake, to defy the absolute power of the gods and to help human beings. His generosity to humans has become his very mistake: to be "a lover of mankind" (Aeschylus 40). What makes Prometheus' error more serious is his proximity to Zeus and Hephaestus, his fellow gods. Prometheus goes beyond the measure,[39] he exceeds in his love of human beings, going beyond the limits prescribed by the gods, and thus reveals his *hybris*: arrogance. Hephaestus laments Prometheus' situation, proclaims his doom and says: "This is thy wage for loving humankind. / For, being a God, thou dared'st the Gods' ill will, / Preferring, to exceeding honour, Man" (40). And Kratos defies Prometheus already bound to the rocks: "Now, where thou gang'st insult! Plunder the Gods / For creatures of a day!" (41). Prometheus keeps this attitude of pride towards the gods, for he says in the same passage:

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[37] Aeschylus used the myth adapting what he thought was necessary, but he altered many things. In the myth, Prometheus is a minor god, in the play he is transformed into a very powerful god, for he gave to the human beings all that characterizes humanity (Kitto **Tragédia** 195).

[38] Aristotle's notion of *mimesis* is not of simple and realistic imitation, likeness, falsification of reality, but representation, more symbolic (Barnes 274-5).

[39] Junito Brandão sums up very well: "... a tragédia só se realiza quando o *métron* é ultrapassado" (**Teatro Grego:**

...what's determined
Bear, as I can, I must, knowing the might
Of strong Necessity is unconquerable. (41)

Prometheus laments his fate, but he still believes he is innocent and the gods unjust, and he keeps resisting the authority of Zeus.

Nemesis is the gods' retribution to *hybris*. So Zeus condemns Prometheus to imprisonment and continuous torture. And here also it is important to observe how excessive Zeus's wrath and punishment are. This enhances our feelings of pity for Prometheus, who suffers innocently, undeservedly. His mistake was to help mortals, challenging Zeus' orders, and his punishment was for eternity. Prometheus cries: "Look down upon my shame, / The cruel wrong that racks my frame, / The grinding anguish that shall waste my strength, / Till time's ten thousand years have measured out their length!" (41). The Chorus also helps to lament Prometheus' fate, and to lead the audience to pity him.

As already mentioned, the figure of Zeus is characterized by cruel tyranny, he is called by Prometheus "the tyrant of the Gods." According to Prometheus' view, Zeus abuses his authority. Aeschylus' play reflects the historical changes in Greece, from tyranny to democracy, and conducts a debate about the old notion of power and the new one, the old notion of justice and the new one (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 24-26).[40]

Aristotle comments in the **Poetics** that the tragic deed can be done wittingly or unwittingly. Well, in the case of Prometheus, he knew the consequences of his actions, because he was able to foresee the future. At the end of his first dialogue with the Chorus, he says: "But all these things I know well. / Of my free will, my own free will, I erred, / And freely do I here acknowledge it" (42). As we can see, Prometheus acted in knowledge. For that reason, it is difficult to apply Aristotle's notion of recognition to **Prometheus Bound**, because knowledge of the future was one of Prometheus' virtues. He advanced his doom, he foresaw his penalty, even

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Tragédia e Comédia 12).

[40] Carlinda Nuñez also comments on tragedy as a social, reflexive experience, through which society debates and understands itself: "A Cidade coloca-se no palco e representa a si mesma, donde se explicam as reações do público, sua violência e mesmo sua recusa em ouvir uma tragédia que toque muito de perto os espectadores. Principalmente a tragédia, que penetrou no calendário cívico da Cidade com cinqüenta anos de antecedência em relação à comédia, põe em questão as contradições internas do recém-instaurado regime democrático, as imprecisões de um mundo regido pelos deuses que disputam em poder com a vontade racional, revelando que o verdadeiro tema da tragédia é o pensamento social e, mais especificamente, o pensamento jurídico, em seu processo mesmo de elaboração" (Nuñez 22-3).

his final sinking into the abyss. There is little action in the play,[41] in fact, but long conversations between the characters, laments and protests abound.[42] At the beginning of the play, Prometheus is attached to the rocks and only in the end is he cast into the abyss. What remains is the movement of the word, the protest, the curse, the cry of fear and pride. The element of peripety is also very difficult to locate and can be related only to events that happen offstage, before the play starts. Prometheus as a supernatural being occupies a position of respect and power. The peripety, the reversal of his situation, happens before the beginning of the play, it is part of the story, it affects the other elements of the plot, but it is not portrayed on the stage.

Fear comes linked with pity and is proportional to the audience's amount of identification with the hero's destiny. Prometheus' pride, his defiance of the authority of the gods, and of the old order, and his passion for hght and progress can be shared with any mortal. The terror the observer feels is the fear of being doomed, of making a similar "mistake": to affirm humanity, to share knowledge, to share hope and to defy the gods. There is this warning to be considered, according to the words of Oceanus: "I am schooled by thy calamity, Prometheus!" (44).

Fear is what moves the Chorus to conclude that there is a lesson to be learned from Prometheus' destiny. At the surface level, the lesson is: nobody can change what fate has decreed. After listening to the Io's story, the Chorus has another moral and fearful lesson to teach: may we not call the gods' attention, and may they not seduce us. The teaching is that we must not cross the lines of our sphere of action, we shall not wish the union with what is superior to us, we shall not desire what belongs to the gods only: absolute power over the destiny of individuals and nations (49).

Below the surface moral lessons of resignation and respect to the gods, there is the "cathartic" experience, the sense of the value of the individual, the example of how one can face the waves of destiny with dignity. The Chorus chooses to be faithful to Prometheus, in spite of the fear, and resist the sinister forces of fate; it says: "I will bear / With him all blows of fate; / For false forsakers I despise" (51). And Prometheus refuses to tell the secret that would probably

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[41] "It is less often noted, but equally true, that in general the action in tragedy occurs offstage, and, like epic action, it is presented to the audience by a kind of stylized narration rather than by direct imitation (mimicking)" (Freeland 113).

[42] "O herói solitário é tudo; e não o que ele faz, mas o que sente e o que é. Ação entre o prólogo e a catástrofe não há nenhuma.... É um drama de revelação, não de ação; de tensão crescente numa situação que não se move" (Kitto **Tragédia** 122).

deliver him, so that the hero we watch fall, being buried in the deeps of the earth in order to be tortured there, still has something that the gods cannot steal. And we feel a kind of celebration of humanity, a sense of value, of importance, in spite of the gods' superior powers. After feeling sorrow for the situation of the hero and fear for the possibility of disgrace in our own human experience, there is this sense of value in resisting destiny with courage and integrity.

[B] Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**

This play by Sophocles was the favorite of Aristotle's and the most used in his **Poetics** in order to illustrate the elements of tragedy. The construction of the play is tight. At the beginning, Oedipus is the king of the city of Thebes, a city visited by a plague. Oedipus consults Apollo in order to find the cause of the disgrace that ruins the city and is told that Apollo was angry because of the murder of Laius, the first husband of Jocasta. The murderer must be punished. Determined to find the killer, Oedipus discovers his own hidden past: the man he killed in his youth was his own father; he was raised by King Polybus of Corinth, and left Corinth in his youth in order to avoid an oracle that said that he would kill his father. Oedipus learns that Jocasta is his mother. In shame, she commits suicide, hanging herself, and Oedipus blinds himself with the sharp needles of her brooches. The characters of the play are: Oedipus (King of Thebes), the Priest of Zeus, Creon (brother of Jocasta), Teiresias (the blind prophet), Jocasta, First Messenger (a shepherd from Corinth), a Shepherd, a Second Messenger (from the house).

Language is very well manipulated in the play, helping to identify the characters and to develop plot. Each character displays a different kind of language, either ironic or poetic, establishing different kinds of relationship between the characters. The verse form indicates the artificiality of the language used in the play and guarantees some distance from the quotidian world. The language of the Priest is poetically embellished. He employs expressions and metaphors of the sea-world, inviting Oedipus to govern the city through "the angry waves of death" (99), as well as metaphors of the world of agriculture: "a blight is on her in the fruitful blossoms of the land, in the herds among the pastures, in the barren pangs of women" (99). The language of the Chorus is marked by its poetic tone and its figurative quality. The rhythm of the

lines changes, the extension varies. Reverence and piety are conveyed by the religious and poetic tone:

> O sweetly-speaking message of Zeus, in what spirit has thou come from
> golden Pytho unto glorious Thebes? I am on the rack, terror shakes my soul,
> O thou Delian healer to whom wild cries rise, in holy fear of thee...: tell me,
> thou immortal Voice, born of Golden Hope! (100)

The solemnity of the language seems appropriate to the noble elders and citizens of the city.

The language of Teiresias is hermetic, full of riddles. In fact, Teirisias is received with great enthusiasm by Oedipus, who calls him the one "whose soul grasps all things," "our protector and only saviour," and he begs his help: "rescue thyself and the State, rescue me, rescue all that is defiled by the dead" (102). He is the blind seer, contrasting with Oedipus, who is the blind soul in spite of his good eyes. However, as the dialogue progresses, as Teiresias first resists to give clear information and then reveals all as if accusing and mocking, revealing as if hiding, tension increases and the inevitable shock with Oedipus occurs (102).

Teiresias' first lines exemplify his tendency to speak riddles: "Alas, how dreadful to have wisdom when it profits not the wise!" (102). And "Thou blamest my temper, but seest not that to which thou thyself art wedded..." (102). The contrast here is evident: knowledge and ignorance, wisdom and foolishness, prudence and imprudence, wish to know more and resistance to reveal. The dialogue becomes very tense and offensive, revealing the negative side of Oedipus' character, his impulsive personality, his insistence on knowing things beyond his scope and comprehension. Teiresias did not want to speak, but Oedipus' insistence forced him to reveal Oedipus' true character as the murderer of Laius—"I say that thou art the slayer of the man whose slayer thou seekest" (102)—, as the incestuous lover of his mother—"I say that thou hast been living in unguessed shame with thy nearest kin" (102)—, as the executioner of his own doom. Oedipus, however, takes all these revelations as personal offenses and accuses Teiresias of being a "tricky quack" (102). Ironically, Oedipus should be able to understand and explain riddles, as he had done with the Sphinx.

Oedipus' language is the richest, varying from lament to tense conversation, offense, confession, inquiry, begging of mercy, official decrees. Just before the encounter with Teirisias and after the first song of the Chorus, Oedipus can use very formal and rhetorical language:

> Thou prayest: and in answer to thy prayer—if thou wilt give a loyal welcome

> to my words and minister to thine own disease—thou mayest hope to find succour and find relief from woes. These words will I speak publicly, as one who has been a stranger to this report, a stranger to the deed... (101)

Oedipus is giving a formal declaration as the ruler of the city, and his language reflects the seriousness of the moment. His discourse also reveals his ignorance and his pride. The serious intention shown in his discourse contrasts ironically with the end of the play, providing for the complexity of the plot. In his tense dialogue with Teiresias, Oedipus reaffirms the same purpose and repeats the same strong language, abusing more and more of his possibilities as a human being and crossing the limits of prudence in discourse, showing *hybris*, something which Teiresias sees clearly: "Nay, I see that thou, on thy part, openest not thy lips in season: therefore I speak not, that neither may I have thy mishap" (102).

Oedipus' obstinacy is made clearer through his language, in the way he insists on Teiresias' collaboration: "For the love of the gods, turn not away, if thou has knowledge: all we suppliants implore thee on our knees" (102). With Teirisias' resistance, Oedipus' language becomes ruder: "What, basest of the base—for thou wouldest anger a very stone—wilt thou never speak out?" (102). He accuses him of being the man who planned the crime against Laius; and when Teirisias' revelations were not what Oedipus was expecting them to be, he becomes even more aggressive with his words, lacking control over the situation. Suddenly, Oedipus' language becomes more ironic and offensive, revealing total lack of respect: "Come, now, tell me, where hast thou proved thyself a seer? Why, when the Watcher was here who wove dark song, didst thou say nothing that could free this folk?" (102).

The interferences of the Chorus also help to evidence Oedipus' lack of prudence. When Jocasta comes and asks Oedipus to believe in Creon's explanations, the Chorus intervenes and says: "Consent, reflect, hearken, O my king, I pray thee!" (105). And this pungent request helps to enhance Oedipus' stubbornness. His dialogue with Jocasta makes evident the tension between faith and scepticism, willingness to believe and resistance to accept others' opinions. As recognition comes, Oedipus becomes conscious of his imprudent language: "I fear, lady, that mine own lips have been unguarded; and therefore am I fain to behold him" (106). In fact, Oedipus elaborates himself through words, narrating his own life and defining his own identity.

The power of the spoken word can also be grasped through the tense and intense dialogue between Oedipus and the Herdsman, near the end of the play, in which Oedipus wants to make

him speak and the man tries to shut up. Both recognize the power of the word: "Ah me—I am on the dreaded brink of speech," says the Herdsman; and Oedipus laments: "And I of hearing; yet must I hear" (110). The revelation comes and Oedipus recognizes his doom and shouts his piercing cries: "Oh, oh ! All brought to pass—all true!" (110).

Oedipus' last dialogue with Creon shows all his suffering. Creon is not revengeful, but compassive towards Oedipus' suffering. When Oedipus, blind, hears the coming of his daughters, he exclaims: "Ha? O ye gods, can it be my loved ones that I hear sobbing, can Creon have taken pity on me and sent my children—my darlings? Am I right?" (112), and Creon answers: "Yea: 'tis of my contriving, for I knew thy joy in them of old, the joy that now is thine" (112). In this last dialogue, language is again used to touch deeply the audience, arousing pity for the suffering of the hero. Therefore, emotion is evidently enhanced by the creative and poetic use of language, the vision of the blind father lamenting the uncertain future of his innocent and frail daughters.[43]

In **Oedipus the King**, dialogue aids characterization and the action of the play. Dialogue represents one aspect of the use of language, always centred on the figure of Oedipus. Through dialogue, the Priest's sympathy towards Oedipus becomes evident (99). Dialogue also helps to give information, as the Priest reports to Oedipus on the terrible plague that threatens the city of Thebes, describing the citizens crowding the market-places, the shrines of Pallas, and the sacred places where the gods give their oracles (99); both speak long lines (the Priest's speech is 48 lines long).

When Creon comes Oedipus' dialogue with him is developed in *stichomythia* (100). This device helps to increase the speed of the scene as well as the expectations about the news to come, the tension, and the emotion. Creon brings Oedipus some information: "Good news: I tell thee that even troubles hard to bear—if haply they find the right issue—will end in perfect peace" (100); and it is possible to perceive the irony of this saying in contrast with the terrible end of the play. In fact, a false clue is given by Creon, fundamental to justify Oedipus' delay in finding the truth: the information according to which "robbers met and fell on them, not in one man's might, but with full many hands" (100). This information moved Oedipus' search to the wrong direction.

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[43] Ligia Costa suggests that Sophocles breaks with Aeschylus' pattern: "A essência de sua cena está na impossibilidade de evitar a dor" (Costa 14).

The dialogue between Oedipus and Teirisias postpones Oedipus' recognition. It leads him to commit his second serious mistake in his search: to conclude that Creon and Teirisias were conspiring against him: "Are these Creon's devices, or thine?" (102). Oedipus' suspicions are mistaken and in ironical contradiction with the plot of the play, which shows the innocence of Teirisias and the ignorance of Oedipus. But the dialogue provides all the emotion necessary and the reasonable although mistaken logic of the hero. Teirisias also gives a long answer to Oedipus' long accusation; he uses 27 lines to reveal Oedipus' lack of understanding and ignorance about his own origin: "Dost thou know of what stock thou art?" (103), and also foreshadows events to happen at the end of the play, talking of Oedipus as "a blind man, he who now hath sight, a beggar, who now is rich, he shall make his way to a strange land, feeling the ground before him with his staff" (103), anticipating Oedipus' reversal of fortune, his disgrace. Teiresias reaches the core of Oedipus' anguish and dilemma.

Oedipus and Jocasta's dialogue also offers great variation in line extension, marking Oedipus' discovery of his misuse of language. At the central part of this dialogue, Oedipus gives a long speech, retelling his own story, from Corinth to Thebes (61 lines). He is the reporter of his own life; his words explain his past and present life more evidently than the words of the oracles. But suddenly he comes to suspect that he is the murderer of Laius, and he then defines himself as a cursed man:

> And this—this curse—was laid on me by no mouth but mine own! And I pollute
> the bed of the slain man with the hands by which he perished. Say, am I vile? Oh,
> am I not utterly unclean?—seeing that I must be banished, and in banishment
> see not mine own people, nor set foot in mine own land... (106)

These lines evidence Oedipus' change, from pride to humble confession, from the assertion of innocence to the recognition of guilt, from certainty to confusion and anguish.

The dialogue of Oedipus and the Messenger is also characterized by the great use of the *stichomythia* in which emotion is enhanced. The Messenger comes to announce the death of Polybus and Oedipus' questioning makes evident his wish to know more and more, and helps to portray him as a searcher, a man in quest for himself (108).[44]

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[44] "O desenvolvimento da ação trágica consistiria na progressiva descoberta da verdade—verdade no sentido de 'aletheia': manifestar-se, des-cobrir-se, 'desconder-se'" (Bornheim **O Sentido e a Máscara** 104).

In Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**, characterization is achieved through the contrast among the characters, the Chorus, costumes and gestures, but the main instrument is language. In the first scene of the play, the petition of the Priest leading the group of suppliants helps to characterize Oedipus as a generous king. At that moment, he seemed to know who he was: "I deemed it unmeet, my children, to hear these things at the mouth of others, and have come hither myself, I, Oedipus renowned of all" (99). And the Priest delineates precisely the stature of Oedipus as a special man, someone aided "by a god," the "best of mortals" and called by the people of the land "the savior" (99).

When Creon comes, Oedipus asks him many questions, which marks him as someone who is in a quest, searching for many answers: "By what rite shall we cleanse us? What is the manner of the misfortune?" (100), "And who is the man whose fate he thus reveals?" (100), "Where shall the dim track of this old crime be found?" (100), "And was it in the house, or in the field, or on strange soil that Laius met this bloody end?" (100). Oedipus is someone who plans to discover the meaning of the events, revealing the hidden things, "making dark things plain" (100). He is too certain of his own judgements, as king and saviour of the city, and resists any suggestion. Oedipus' wild speech contrasts with Creon's careful use of language, who simply says: "where I lack light, 'tis my wont to be silent" (104). Contrasting with Oedipus, Creon's long defense of innocence reveals prudence, to moderation and wisdom.

As Oedipus comes near to the climax of the play, the search becomes more intense and painful to him, but he is decided to find the answers and to move up to the end of his inquires (109). Now with the clues brought by this Messenger and with the revelation of another man to come, the Herdsman, Oedipus feels that it is impossible "to fail to bring [his] birth to light" (109). At this moment, when Jocasta perceives all the truth, she tries to bar Oedipus from continuing in his quest and to deviate him but Oedipus misunderstands Jocasta's real intentions (109). In fact, Jocasta's lucidity contrasts with and enhances Oedipus' ignorance and stubbornness. Even anticipating the worst and being advised by the Chorus with a fearful woe and urged by Jocasta to give up his search, Oedipus is convinced that he cannot and must not change the course of his pursuit: "Break forth what will! Be my race never so lowly, I must crave to learn it" (109). And this firmness is only possible because he is equally convinced to be the favorite "son of Fortune" (109), predestined to be great, which indicates *hybris*.

At this moment, the old Herdsman arrives; and his humble presence contrasts with the pride and richness of the King in his palace (109). Soon the Herdsman understands the situation, the real identity of Oedipus, contrasting with the king's ignorance, and as he understands he resists to reveal the painful truth, giving Oedipus the opportunity of showing his anger. And as the man's resistance increases, Oedipus starts making menaces: "Thou art lost if I have to question thee again" (110). He is always pushing the story forward, forcing the answer, moving fast towards his own fall. And when the light finally comes and he sees all clearly, a deep darkness is rolled over him: "Oh, oh! All brought to pass—all true! Thou light, may I now look my last on thee—I who have been found accursed in birth, accursed in wedlock, accursed in the shedding of blood!" (110). Oedipus experiences the full knowledge of his own identify as a moment of darkness.

As we have observed, all the characters in the play are functional. Each character comes in his/her own time to reveal some traces of Oedipus' personality, his wish of knowledge, his obstinacy, his virtues and his defects. They also help to develop the action, pushing the scenes, revealing expected and unexpected information. Some characters are complex and display some sort of change, like Jocasta who becomes conscious of the catastrophic situation and commits suicide, or like the Chorus who accomplishes several different tasks, praying for to the gods' help, lamenting the hero's lack of fortune, giving good advices, commenting on the scenes and meditating on philosophical and ethical implications as the story progresses. Other characters are types—the Herdsman, the Messenger, the Priest, and the Second Messenger. Their presence in the play is very brief and they do not have room for evolution or change. Characterization is done mainly through language, but the visual, aural as well as physical aspects are also fundamental.

In terms of structure, **Oedipus the King** presents one of the most perfect and tight constructions, in which the major and minor elements are linked by the law of causality and logic. The conflict of the play seems to be unveiled in stages: 1) there is a plague; 2) the cause of the plague is the impunishment of Laius' murderer who lives in Thebes; 3) Oedipus seems to be connected with the plague and the murderer; 4) Oedipus' search for his true identity turns out to be the major conflict. This unveiling of the conflict and the fact that it is done in stages helps to create tension. Besides the major conflict, Oedipus' search for his true identity, other minor conflicts are presented in the play: Oedipus' wish for knowledge and Teiresias' resistance in

telling the whole truth; Oedipus' false suspicion about Creon's conspiration; Creon's charge of madness at Oedipus (103-5). The play can be viewed as an example of how the dilemmas of the present are solved with the memories of the past, how the future is altered when those memories are revived and turned conscious. The climax of the play can be related to Oedipus' total recognition of his own origin and identity, and the crimes he has committed unwittingly: "Oh, oh! All brought to pass—all true!" (110).

Oedipus the King's structure includes all the elements traditionally expected in a Greek tragedy—a prologue (the exposition part), several scenes interweaved with songs of the chorus, an epilogue (the dénouement). Throughout the play, there is a logic of cause-and-consequence relation connecting all the scenes and conflicts. The end of the play fulfills the expectations of the audience and provides for the discovery of the truth and the revelation of the crime. Although the oracles propose a certain established destiny, Oedipus is responsible for his acts;[45] he performs his deeds with his own hands and moves towards the direction of recognition without hesitation, refusing any sort of advice or counsel.[46] Indeed, the play does not show the moment of the crime; when it starts the crime has already been committed. What the play shows is the movement of Oedipus towards the consciousness of the crime, of his own origin, and of his true identity. The structure of the play reveals unity of action, unity of place, and unity of time. Conflicts are evident and subordinate to the main conflict: Oedipus' search for his own origin and identity.

The Chorus functions in the play as another character. It interacts with the characters, giving advice, commenting on their actions, lamenting, singing, dancing. Besides, it helps to structure and develop the play, dividing the scenes, and enhancing their emotional potentiality. It represents the values and interests of the city, therefore mediating the relation between the actors and the audience. As characters, they are inside the universe of the play; as intermediaries, they are somehow distanced from the events of the play and can offer some commentary, directly affecting the audience.

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[45] "Para os Atenienses, a responsabilidade de tomarem as suas próprias decisões, realizando-as e aceitando-lhes as consequências, era parte essencial da vida dos homens livres. É esta uma das razões por que a arte popular de Atenas foi a tragédia de Ésquilo e de Sófocles, e a comédia de Aristófanes, enquanto a nossa é o cinema!" (Kitto **Os Gregos** 213).

[46] As Brandão observes very appropriately: "... em Édipo Rei, o papel do destino termina no momento em que a peça se inicia" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 43).

The first participation of the Chorus is clearly a song, built in verse form and six stanzas. It is not addressed to any character on the stage; it is a prayer conveying fear and suffering: "I am on the rack, terror shakes my soul" (100). It comes right after the exit of the Priest and the Suppliants and before the formal speech of Oedipus declaring the banishment of the one responsible for the death of Laius, thus dividing the two scenes. The Chorus invokes the spirits of prophesy that abide in Delos, in the Pythian shrine, and the divine inspiration of a goddess called Hope, Athena and Artemis, and gods of war and death, known to the audience, enhancing the fragility of the human enterprise, heightening the sense of crisis (100-1). The question here is not only the suffering itself, but the impossibility of understanding it and elaborating a logical answer to it.

In the tense dialogue between Oedipus and Teirisias, the Chorus makes a very short intervention, trying to calm down the wrath of both characters, mediating their discussion and warning about the risk of *hybris*: "To our thinking, both this man's words and thine, Oedipus, have been said in anger. Not for such words is our need, but to seek how we shall best discharge the mandates of the god" (103). The intervention also shows that the major conflict does not lie between Oedipus and Teiresias; it points to something else, more general and serious.

The second song by the Chorus is full of religious expressions and allusions, referring to the criminal as a cursed man, persecuted by the Furies and by the lightnings of Zeus (103). The identity of the criminal constitutes the great question of this song and the central concern of the play: "Who is he of whom the divine voice from the Delphian rock hath spoken, as having wrought with red hands horrors that no tongue can tell?" (103). This song also stresses the fear generated by the revelations of Teirisias against Oedipus and also reverberates the astonishment caused by Teirisias' words, because although his words were plain enough, there is no "proof in assailing the public fame of Oedipus" (103). The Chorus shakes in fear at the consequences of a mistaken judgement and is paralized by a dilemma: to accept either the oracles of Teirisias as face-facts or the innocence of Oedipus, showed many times in the past. This is a religious as well as a political and philosophical issue: do the oracles provide trustworthy access to the truth? Can any man declare himself to be the owner of the truth without a substancial proof? Can the elders resist the authority of the king and suspect its trustworthiness?

Wisdom and reconciliation seem to be the most evident features of the Chorus, which tries to intervene positively before the other characters. Prudence is also evident when it answers Creon's provocations: "I see not what my masters do..." (104). Paradoxically, it is the master who is going to prove blind. In the second argument between Creon and Oedipus, the Chorus interposes in favor of Creon: "Well hath he spoken, O king, for one who giveth heed not to fall: the quick in counsel are not sure" (104). In its next intervention, the Chorus develops the action and prepares for the coming of Jocasta. The intervention also characterizes the Chorus as the wise men of State who want the prosperity and the security of the city, and invoke the gods in fear, enhancing the crisis that strikes the State.[47] The second song reveals a certain religious crisis in the middle of Greek society, referring to the fading of old prophesies, to the decadence of the cult to Apollo, and to the growing coldness of the people's faith in religion. The Chorus privileges obedience and respect toward the gods, reverence for the divine images and sacred places (107).

The last song of the Chorus follows Oedipus' full recognition of his deeds and is the saddest of the play, mixing pity and fear, meditating on human frailty and on the evanescence of human bliss: "Thine is a fate that warns me—thine, thine, unhappy Oedipus—to call no earthly creature blest" (110). The Chorus identifies with the suffering of the hero: "'twas thou that gavest me new life, and through thee darkness hath fallen upon mine eyes" (110).

Tension is a result of the major and minor conflicts of the play, because of the expectations aroused—the development of the conflicts, the solution to come, if it comes and when it comes. Since the major conflict points to Oedipus' search for identity, the main tension has to do with his self-illumination, in fact a dark moment.[48]

When Teirisias comes and a conflict is established between the man who wants to know about the origin of his own life and the seer who knows it and refuses to share the mystery of his knowledge, the tension increases. Teirisias' riddles contribute to it because they arouse many questions without answers, putting the mind in suspension. As the dialogue becomes tense, they

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[47] In fact, in Brandão's words, following the interpretation of Bachofen, the play reflects a debate about two different views on justice: one governed by the curse of the family, by the *ius polis*, the law of the *guénos*; and the new conception of justice, the *ius fori*, "a nova mentalidade jurídico-religiosa, que julga as ações humanas atentando sempre à consciência e à culpabilidade individual e não à mera conexão externa dos fatos" (**Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 27).

[48] "Tragedies such as **Oedipus** and **Lear** do show a kind of progress toward self-knowledge. But it is achieved at the price of ruin" (Steiner 169).

start to exchange mutual offenses and the conflict is frontal. And when the revelation comes, Oedipus becomes even more violent and angry. Both speak too much, Oedipus out of excess of emotion and wish to know himself, and Teirisias out of excess of restraint of information and freedom of mind (103). The most intense moments coincide with the lines in *stichomythia* and with the prophesies about Oedipus' final moment: his blindness, and his departure from Thebes in his way "to a strange land, feeling the ground before him with his staff" (103).[49] Each prophesy brings a question about its fulfillment. In fact, Oedipus' tense relation with Teirisias is only an indication of his tense relation with himself, his psychological and spiritual conflict.

The relation between Oedipus and Jocasta also generates tension, concerning what is known and what is hidden, what is conscious and what is unconscious, what belongs to the human sphere of action and what belongs to the oracles. She seems to be convinced of the uselessness of the oracles and tries to pacify Oedipus' tormented soul, his internal conflict. But her counsels have the contrary effect. And when, later on, Jocasta enters the stage as a suppliant, it becomes evident that she is taking the oracles very seriously (107). Almost immediately, the Messenger comes bringing news about Polybus' death and Jocasta despises the oracles of the gods again: "O ye oracles of the gods, where stand ye now!" (107).

At the moment of discovery, tension is overwhelming because of what Jocasta and the audience know and Oedipus ignores and is about to know. Oedipus is resolute: "Brake forth what will!" (109). The Chorus is exultant about Oedipus' pastoral, mythical origin (109). But in fact, the revelation to be brought will contrast with all the effusive preparation. When Oedipus' full recognition takes place, tension is released and replaced with deep pain and pathetic events only reported by the Second Messenger: Jocastas' suicide, Oedipus' self-inflicted blindness (110).

The play develops many themes other than the meaning of life and the need of identity and personal history. It also presents the theme of the force of the unknown, the power human relationships have in determining our destiny, the lack of control over our relationships, and the

[49] "A word on Oedipus' mask in the final scene. The actor must have changed his mask to one whith dark eye-sockets with streams of blood running down from them. The messenger reports in gory detail how Oedipus jabs out his own eyes (1268ff.); and he is, as often, immediately followed by the revelation of the results of the events he has just been narrating (what German scholars have labelled an *Ecceszene*). The sight of blood has a horrible fascination: it is yet more repellent and more fascinating when one has been told all about its shedding" (Taplin **Greek Tragedy in Action** 89).

desire for knowledge and self-affirmation.[50] Oedipus makes many mistaken inferences in life about who his parents are, who his wife is, what Creon's and Teiresias' real intentions are, who he really is. He also shows that, in order to make our lives sensible, it is important to face the dilemmas it proposes. The individual must not run away from his destiny but he shall run directly toward it, with all his strength. He can spare nothing "to search out the secret of [his] birth" (109).

There is, at the end of the play, a commentary made by the Chorus, presumably, suggesting a moral lesson about the story of the play: "Therefore, while our eyes wait to see the destined final day, we must call no one happy who is of mortal race, until he hath crossed life's border, free from pain" (113). It suggests that the main theme is related to the limits of human happiness, the inconstancy of human existence, the inherent force of pain in human life, and death as the great judge and redeemer of life.

Spectacle is an important component of the play and collaborates with the text to produce a stronger effect in the audience, being inferred from the text, the dialogues, and the songs of the Chorus. The setting is the same throughout the play, the front door of the palace of a king,[51] which suggests all the beauty and richness of the scenery. There is an altar in front of the palace, surrounded by "altar steps" (100). Characters enter and exit the stage, the Chorus of elders finds its place in the orchestra. The group of Suppliants on the stage completes the scenery; they represent the entire city of Thebes, young and old people, even children "nestling still too tender for far flights" (99), all carrying branches of olive and burning incenses. The scenery of the play is the front part of Oedipus' palace, near the door. When Oedipus blinds himself, he laments the loss of the image of his children and also the loss of the vision of "this town with its towered walls" and "the sacred statues of the gods" (111).

Entrances and exits contribute to create and enhance the effects of the play as a spectacle. There are many meaningful examples in the play: the entrance and exit of the Suppliants, the

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[50] Indeed, as it is illustrated by the enigma of the Sphinx, the human being is the central element of the play: "... tudo faz crer que o elemento mais importante do enigma não é a formulação manifesta do mito, quer dizer, a charada propriamente dita, mas a resposta a esta:—*o homem*.... aquele que sabe que a resposta mais importante que o homem pode dar à pergunta mais difícil, com a qual o homem se pode defrontar, é o *próprio homem*, pode salvar a humanidade. O enigma serve tão-somente de véu ao sentido latente da questão, a *importância do homem*" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 49).

[51] "Hence the natural setting of tragedy is the palace gate, the public square, or the court chamber. Greek and Elizabethan life and, to a certain extent, the life of Versailles shared this character of intense 'publicity'" (Steiner 195).

entrance of the Chorus, Teiresias, Creon, Jocasta, the Messenger, the Herdsman, and Oedipus' daughters. When Oedipus and the Suppliants exit, in the first scene of the play, the Chorus enters and will possibly not leave the stage until the end. However, it would be possible for the members of the Chorus to leave the stage in ritualized, solemn, slow steps, but this is not indicated in the text. Oedipus' second entrance, in order to give his formal proclamation, is an important moment in the play, suggesting an atmosphere of solemnity, the formality of an official address to all the Thebans (101).

The entrance of Jocasta and Teirisias are announced by the Chorus. Jocasta's second entrance, as a suppliant, calling for reverence and obedience toward the gods, causes much more surprise since she brings wreaths and incenses in her hands (107). The Corinthian Messenger enters without announcement, mysteriously, unexpectedly, begging some information from the Chorus.

Jocasta's last exit from the stage, just after her recognition of the situation, is full of significance: "Alas, alas, miserable!—that word alone can I say unto thee, and no other word henceforth for ever" (109). These words declaring formally her self-imposed silence suggest that she is going to commit suicide, that her voice will be heard no more. But Oedipus cannot grasp that, he is blinded by his own desire to see.

Oedipus' exit is a spectacle of pain and agony. The Chorus sings a sad song, and from the interior of the palace the Second Messenger comes suddenly, grave and tense, amazed and full of reverence, bringing the report of Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-inflicted blindness (110). After the Messenger's report, Oedipus comes from the inside and his entrance is the most spectacular of the play, washed in blood, crying, a wise man turned mad, a happy man turned sad, prowling by the walls, a vision of disgrace, the incarnation of tragedy, the image of pain, fulfilling Teireisias' prophesy: "A blind man, he who now hath sight, a beggar, who now is rich, he shall make his way to a strange land, feeling the ground before him with his staff" (103). Antigone and Ismene are the last characters to enter the stage and give room to the play's most touching gesture, as Oedipus, blind and bloody, clasps his daughters' hands: "My children, where are ye? Come hither, hither to the hands of him whose mother was your own, the hands whose offices have wrought that your sire's once bright eyes should be such orbs as these..." (112).

Social differences and functions are diverse in the play. The crowd of Suppliants assembles the most different kinds of people, identified by the common fortune of living in the city of Thebes. Oedipus is the king, Jocasta is the Queen, Creon belongs to the royal family, the Chorus members belong to the higher class of the city.[52] Therefore their garments should convey something of their social position, as their language in fact does.[53] Even children are presented on the stage at the beginning, with the crowd of Suppliants, and at the end, as we have seen, the daughters of Oedipus appear. Creon is described by the Priest as "crowned thus thickly with berry-laden bay" (100). So Creon either wears this laurel on his head, or his mask portrays it. Teirisias comes onto the stage led by a boy. His blindness could also be indicated by the mask he wore, as well as by a cane. Oedipus comments on Teirisias' grey hairs that characterize him as an "old man" (103).

The Messenger who comes to announce Polybus' death is a stranger from Corinth, and his dress should offer some kind of identification, as Jocasta salutes him: "Happiness to thee also, stranger! 'tis the due of thy fair greeting" (107). According to the words of Oedipus, he is an "old man," and he calls Oedipus "my son" (108). The Herdsman is described by the Corinthian Messenger as a fellow-countryman of the Thebans (109), and he is described by Oedipus as a man "in his venerable age" and is brought onto the stage by an Oedipus' servant (109). So he should be dressed appropriately as an old man and as a shepherd (109-10). When Oedipus comes onto the stage, after piercing his own eyes with Jocasta's "golden brooches" he is completely washed in blood (111). The visual effect of the intense red colour of blood covering his clothes should produce a strong impact on the audience.

As important as the costumes and all the visual aspects of the play, the sound element is of a great variety in **Oedipus the King**. In fact, this is a play of many different kinds of noise. At the beginning there are the laments and litanies spoken by the Suppliants at the door of Oedipus'

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[52] "But, while the lavishness of the costumes was perhaps the chief element in the visual grandness of the tragic stage, the specific use of clothing as a significant part of the play's meaning is fairly straightforward, perhaps because the size of the theatre precludes detail. IT is, as a rule, simply a matter of contrast: Greek and Barbarian, costly and poor, finery and mourning. The instances I discuss are, in fact, mostly distincit items which can be taken off and given special attention—wreaths, armour, veils and so forth" (Taplin **Greek Tragedy in Action** 78).

[53] "It must be remembered, too, that in the Greek theatre the actor was a remote figure, masked, wearing *cothurnoi* on his feet and an *onkos* on his head (so that he had a height of some seven and a half feet), and was taking part in a religious and civic rite at a special festival.... but he was representing a king or hero, he spoke with a poet's words..." (Leech 33).

palace (99). When addressing Oedipus, the Priest reports that all the city is haunted by groans and tears from the population in the market-places, shrines, houses, because of a terrible plague (99). The speech of the Priest presents some very eloquent parts, probably indicating a high volume in lines such as: "nay, lift up this State in such wise that it fall no more!" (99).

Oedipus receives the Suppliants with benevolence and good will. Their conversation, however, is interrupted by some shouting indicating the arrival of Creon (99). Oedipus also shouts with joy and expectation: "O king Apollo, may he come to us in the brightness of saving fortune, even as his face is bright!" (99). After the first song of the Chorus, Oedipus decrees the banishment of the men involved in Laius' death (101). A formal proclamation requires a formal intonation and a higher volume of voice.

Oedipus' final entrance on the stage is very sonorous and painful. His cries are piercing: "O thou horror of darkness that enfoldest me, visitant unspeakable, resistless, sped by a wind too fair! Ay me! and once again, ay me! How is my soul pierced by the stab of these goads, and withal by the memory of sorrows!" (111). In the last scene there is also the moving sound of Oedipus' daughters sobbing.

The songs of the Chorus constitute part of the sonorous dimension of the play, and there are many moments of music and dance in **Oedipus the King**. Although the melody is lost, the rhythm can be grasped and the solemnity of the theme that enhances the religious character of the first song. As in Aeschylus, the language of the Chorus is Doric whereas the Greek used in the dialogues is Attic, emphasizing the distinct character and function of the Chorus. The music of the Chorus was accompanied by ritualized gestures and dance, and as the Chorus is composed by eldermen of the city, their dance should be very discreet and solemn.

After the second song of the Chorus, there is a dialogue in form of song between Oedipus and the Chorus and between the Chorus, Jocasta, and Oedipus (105). At this moment, the song is not something apart from the action; it is not a meditation or a prayer, but a dynamic communicative interchange in question-and-answer form, helping to deepen Oedipus' suffering as representing and encompassing the suffering of the human race.

Having analyzed the theatrical devices used by Sophocles, now I intend to apply the Aristotelian terms to **Oedipus the King**. In accordance with the principles of Aristotle, the hero of the play is really a noble, good man, showing many virtues—courage, energy, intelligence,

pride. He is a king, a benevolent king who feels sorry for the sufferings of the people.[54] Oedipus is the man who saved the city once from the menace of the Sphinx, and he shows sincere desire to help the people to find the cause of their suffering. This confirms Aristotle's notion of the hero as someone who "stands in great repute and prosperity" (Aristotle 38). But, according to the characteristics of a good tragic hero, he is not perfect. At a certain moment of his life, he committed a *hamartia*, an error of perception and decision. The Priest of Zeus seems to be very conscious of Oedipus' human nature. Differently from Aeschylus, here we have human beings and not gods on stage, although the gods are always present through their oracles.

The notion of *mimesis* in **Oedipus the King** suggests the idea of representation, and not of mere copy of the myth. In fact, Sophocles' play presents some variation in relation to the original sources, the number of Oedipus' sons, his expulsion from the city, ostracized. Differently from the ancient tradition, which emphasized the force of Fate and the impotence of the individual before the decrees of Destiny, Sophocles shows the resistance of the hero, his insistence on affirming his own wish, his dignity before the overwhelming disgrace.

Oedipus' *hamartia*, his basic mistake, is a very important element of the plot. He belonged to a family doomed to disgrace, and he was under a curse. Apparently, Oedipus' basic mistake is to try to avoid the oracles of the gods, running away *from* his own destiny. He had the illusion that he could deceive the gods. Resisting the divine oracles, assuming the control of his own life, Oedipus runs away from Corinth and commits his first terrible crime: he kills his father, without knowledge, followed by recognition, and this is, according to Aristotle, the best example of tragic action (Aristotle 41). But, from deeper point of view, Oedipus' *hamartia* can precisely be related to his noble obstinacy to find the truth, to run *toward* his own destiny, wishing to know his own real origin and identity. According to this view, Oedipus falls because he wants to know, to see better his own existence, and he blinds himself at the end because he is ashamed of what he sees. In knowing and understanding his own destiny, Oedipus commits a *hamartia* which causes his own disgrace. According to the words of the blind prophet Teiresias: "Nay, Creon is no plague to thee; thou art thine own" (Sophocles 103).

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[54] According to Ligia Costa, Oedipus is "o verdadeiro herói trágico por sua falta de individualidade, isto é, pelo fato de o seu destino não ser um destino individual, mas ser o destino da família dos Labdácidas" (57).

Another important concept in Aristotle is the notion of *peripety*, the reversal of fortune, and he gives the example of Oedipus, how his fortune changed when, at the very end of the play, he was expecting to receive good news but the Messenger brought him the opposite, thus triggering the recognition of his own doom, the terrible seriousness of his situation. *Anagnorisis*, we may recall, is recognition, and it is coincidental with his *peripety*. Besides, there is the great *peripety* in Oedipus' destiny: from a powerful and happy king he becomes a blind and poor beggar.[55]

The audience pities Oedipus and fears for his situation, because his crime, the murder of his father, was done by accident, without full knowledge, and the marriage to his mother was done in ignorance in spite of their big difference in age. If there is a crime, this crime is related to his resolution not to commit a crime, therefore resisting the fulfillment of the oracles, trying to hide himself from his own destiny; it also lies in his craving for knowledge, in his fascination with the oracles and his attempt to understand them.[56] Creon accuses Oedipus of being obstinate and ambitious, indirectly implying that Oedipus' ***hybris*** that caused his ***hamartia*** was that he did not know "how to keep a sober mind" (104). And the *nemesis* was too hard: the plague widespread in the city, the loss of the kingdom, the suicide of Jocasta, his own exile, his own blindness, the shame and suffering of his daughters. This excessive punishment for a *hamartia* so difficult to prevent and so much linked with the human nature endows the play with an intense impact in terms of provoking pity. Oedipus can not help it, he can not prevent it. And the sense of pity is again emphasized because the tragic action of the play involves very closely related individuals, members of the same family, son and father, son and mother, according to the principles of Aristotle (Aristotle 40-1). On the other hand, there is a sense of fear, a consciousness that our happiness, in the proportion that we identify with him as human beings, is not safe, that even a small misjudgment can ruin our lives, that nobody is happy before the end of the story. And the Chorus appropriately says: "Therefore, while our eyes wit to see the destined final day, we must call no one happy who is of mortal race, until he hath crossed life's border, free from pain" (Sophocles 113). These last lines enhance the sense of fear for us who share the same human race and condition.

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[55] The problem of tragedy is not portraying happiness or unhappiness, but the sudden changes in happiness (Bittner 107).

Catharsis is expected to be achieved in this play through the intense portrayal of excessive suffering and the intense fear provoked by pathetic actions. The intensity of the emotions involved in the play triggers a proportional amount of purification, a sense of relief because the crime is already punished and the world still preserves its meaning, a sense of the dignity of the human being in this extreme situation, a sense that one can face the worst and overcome it, although with pain and remorse. The Chorus wants to teach that the gods should be taken seriously: "May destiny still find me winning the praise of reverent purity in all words and deeds sanctioned by those laws of range sublime, called into life throughout the high clear heaven..." (107). These words intensify the sense of fear, of the possibility that this could happen to us. And the Chorus even condemns and alerts against the sin of *hybris*: "Insolence breeds the tyrant" (107), as if Oedipus were insolent against the gods in trying to escape his destiny. There is a sense of relief because Oedipus finally discovered his own origin, in spite of all the fear and suffering. And when Oedipus blinds himself in punishment, in a way he pays the price, he is the victim of the sacrifice, he purifies himself of his terrible *hamartia* with his own blood, although the Messenger, at the end of the play, comments that "not Ister nor Phasis could wash this house clean, so many are the ills that it shrouds" (110).

[C] Euripides' **Medea**

Medea presents the story of a woman who is betrayed and humillated by her husband and expelled from the city where she lives, Corinth. Her husband Jason fell in love with the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth, and was engaged to her in a new marriage. After a long internal conflict of wish for vengeance and love of her children (she had two by Jason), Medea makes a decision and, one by one, kills the Corinthian princess, king Creon, and her own two children, leaving Jason alive but without wife and children. After these terrible deeds, she escapes in the chariot of her grandfather, the sun-god Helios, having provided for her reception in Athens by King Aegeus. The characters of the play are: Medea's Nurse, the Attendant of her children, Medea, a chorus of Corinthian Women, the two children of Jason and Medea, besides Creon, Jason, Aegeus, and a Messenger.

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[56] The aspiration for knowledge is an important issue in Western literature, mainly visible in the myth of Faust.

Medea is very effective as a play, a very good example of Euripides' ability to handle the theatrical devices: language, characterization, structure, tension, theme, spectacle, sound and visual devices, music, and the Chorus. Well, the first element is language, collaborating with all the other elements, being always functional, but sometimes calling attention to itself for the very sake of its beauty and force. The first part of the play, the exposition, is presented by Medea's "own handmaid" (212), who came to Corinth with her, from a distant country. It is reasonable to suppose that her language was marked by some sort of accent that could indicate her origin. However, considering only the written text of an English translation from the Greek, it is difficult to observe any hints of linguistic peculiarity.

Medea's first address to the Chorus exemplifies her ability in the use of language, lamenting on the difficult condition of being a stranger in the land and standing against prejudice and injustice (213-4). She also meditates on women's condition, sadly inferiorized in relation to the male sex—"we women are the most hapless creatures"; being single, married, or divorced, women are always under the command of a man. But Medea suggests that there is a moment in which woman finds force and overcomes her limited condition: when "her honour [is] wronged" (214). Medea also comments on the risks of being too wise in comparison to the rest of her peers and arousing the reputation of idleness among the citizens. She is conscious that her bad reputation is caused by her superior intelligence (214). With her subtle arguments, Medea convinces Creon and cheats him, evidencing that she is in control of the situation by her articulate language (214). As Creon resists accepting Medea's permanence in the city, her language becomes more appealing, more exclamative, pretending weakness: "Suffer me to abide this single day and devise some plan for the manner of my exile..." (215). This "plan" is a very ambiguous term; her plans are not to leave, but to kill. As part of her total control over language, Medea shows conscious dominion over her silence: "... then will I proceed to this bloody deed in crafty silence..." (215). She restrains her impulses, controlling her pain, hiding her projects.

Medea's competent use of language is also evident in her argument with Jason, who accuses her of speaking too agressive words "against our rulers" (216). She is very eloquent in her defense, arguing with ability and discretion. Jason's arguments are very artificial and his words less vivid. He uses rhetorical language to show his superiority, having to "turn orator, and, like a good helmsman on a ship with close-reefed sails, weather that wearisome tongue of thine"

(216). Jason's metaphor alludes to the sea, sailing, which he knew very well as the leader of the Argonauts. In fact, Jason uses some fundamental principles of rhetoric, praising Medea's ability with words, capturing her benevolence: "Thou hast a subtle wit enough..." (216), enumerating the favours he had bestowed upon her: "First, thou dwellest in Hellas, instead of thy barbarian land, and hast learnt what justice means and how to live by law, not by the dictates of brute force..." (216). Justice, law, favour, "retort", "prove"—Jason is very careful with words, appealing to fallacies to convince Medea of the importance of fame as a recognition for knowledge and ability and of the convenience of his marriage to Creon's daughter (216). But Jason's discourse is inneffective; Medea unmasks and curses him with her powerful words.

Dialogue is another very important element of the play. The first one happens after the Nurse's soliloquy, between her and the Attendant. In this dialogue, the suffering of Medea is conveyed through the language of her servants (212-3). Jason's betrayal is reported and Medea's banishment from the city is unofficially announced: "I heard one say... that Creon, the ruler of this land, is bent on driving these children and their mother from the boundaries of Corinth; but I know not whether the news is to be relied upon..." (212). This piece of gossip characterizes the servants and their concern with the life of their masters and also prepares for the development of the story.

Another interesting device is that a character can speak to one person at a time and immediately turn to another. The Nurse, for example, addresses the children in the first sentence: "Go, children, within the house; all be well..." and in the sequence she addresses the Attendant: "... Do thou keep them as far away as may be, and bring them not near their mother in her evil hour..." (213). This aproximates their dialogues to a more realistic portrayal of human interaction, giving characters dynamism, suggesting movement, variation of tone and volume. The language of the Nurse in this same passage also prepares for future events, foreshadowing the threat of Medea's wrath towards her own children in a metaphorical language: "... that cry is but the herald of the gathering storm-cloud whose lightning soon will flash" (213). While the Nurse talks to the children and to the Attendant, Medea keeps crying from within the house.

Dialogues also prepare for the entrance of characters, as when the Leader of the Chorus introduces Creon onto the stage, who comes to officially announce Medea's banishment from the city (214). This dialogue develops the plot and helps to characterize Creon as a father concerned

with his own children and Medea as a very "cunning woman," capable of making plans of vengeance and hiding them behind witty and convincing words (214-5). As the dialogue progresses, form becomes more concentrated and dynamic, mainly in the part in *stichomythia* (215). *Stichomythia* is also used in Medea's dialogue with Jason, in which very short sentences are interchanged.

The dialogue between Medea and Aegeus is the most peculiar in the play, basically uttered in *stichomythia* lines, very quick, intense, and varied. It is important in terms of action and characterization, for it secures a safe refuge for Medea in her exile at the same time that it confirms her ability as a sorcerer and as an expert in riddles and oracles; she uses words "too subtle for man to comprehend" (218). It also offers parallelism and contrast. Aegeus, without children and willing to receive Medea, contrasts with Jason, a man who has children and who despises Medea's importance in his life; his wish to raise a seed unto himself can be paralleled to Jason's want of children at the end of the play (217-8).

In the second meeting between Jason and Medea, their dialogue has a different aspect. It has the appearance of a reconciliation, but in fact it is a display of artistic enactment, a show of Medea's capacity for representation. This dialogue presents a penitent woman who regrets her past deeds and words, a woman who recognizes the virtues of her unfaithful husband and thanks him for being unfaithful (219). She even recognizes the natural childishness and even malignity of woman, and Jason is hooked: "Lady, I praise this conduct, not that I blame what is past; for it is but natural to the female sex to vent their spleen against a husband when he trafficks in other marriages besides his own" (219). The dialogue ends with their supposed agreement, paralleling Medea's agreement with Aegeus.

Characterization is also very important in the play. Characters are presented and developed through several devices: soliloquies, dialogues, songs, gestures, attitudes, actions, costumes and characters' opinions. Medea is the most well-developed of all. At the beginning, the Nurse portrays Medea as a "hapless wife, thus scorned" by her husband, a sad and angry woman (212). She suspects that Medea is a dangerous woman, capable of contriving "some untoward scheme of vengeance," and thus sends the children into the house and advises the Attendant to keep them far from "their mother in her evil hour" (213). Medea's lack of emotional balance is here suggested, since she is stirred by "wild fancies" and wild furies (213).

In her long speech, Medea also presents herself as a foreigner that is pressed to "adopt a city's view" in order to survive (213-4), as a woman "scorned by [her] husband, a captive [she] from a foreign shore, with no mother, brother, or kinsman in whom to find a new haven of refuge from this calamity" (214).

When Jason comes onto the stage, he evinces another important characteristic of Medea: her sharp use of words, referring to her "harsh temper" and to her "idle words" used against king Creon (215). In answer, Medea outbursts in many aggressive expressions: "Thou craven villain (for that is the only name my tongue can find for thee, a foul reproach on thy unmanliness)..." (216). She calls him the "most hated foe of gods, of me, and of all mankind" (216), she accuses him of lacking in "courage or hardihood" and "shame" (216). But in her answer she also displays logic and control, alluding to the several benefits she brought to him.

Througout the play, Medea laments and defends the female sex, resisting prejudice and denouncing the lack of "just discernment in the eyes of men" (214).[57] She is a very conscious woman, conscious of her own disgrace, dignity, power and route. She declares to be a "ruined" woman, wishing to die. However, Medea understands that, in order to overcome all the difficulties imposed to the female sex, she must learn all things by herself and have a "diviner's eye to see how best to treat the partner of her life" (214). In fact, Medea has this "diviner's eyes" and she is therefore treated as "a witch by nature," a "cunning woman" used to dealing with supernatural power and knowledge (214). And indeed she had helped Jason to escape from his enemies by using sorcery. Having Aegeus provided a refuge for her she offers him her ability as a sorcerer to help him beget children—"for I will make thy childlessness to cease and cause thee to beget fair issue; so potent are the spells I know" (218).

A very important aspect is Medea's ability to make plans of vengeance and control the situation as well as the other characters, being capable of "[deadly] thoughts" when her honor is wronged (214). The play as a whole evidences her ability to make and execute her plans.[58] In a

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[57] "For Medea, in her outburst against masculine complacency, is the first of a long line of protestant heroines; in whom the rapid reversal of the 'womanly' emotions may lead to a virulent bitterness of purpose, the conversion of milk or manna into gall" (Henn 107).

[58] Frye comments on tragedies structured around the theme of vengeance: "In its most elementary form, the vision of law (*dike*) operates as *lex talionis* or revenge. The hero provokes enmity, or inherits a situation of enmity, and the return of the avenger constitutes the catastrophe. The revenge-tragedy is a simple tragic structure, and like most simple structures can be a very powerful one, often retained as a central theme even in the most complex tragedies"

soliloquy, after Creon's exit (215), she decides to use poison, foresees a way to offer it to Jason's bride, thinks where to go after the crime is committed, thus considering every detail of her crime. She is resolute, and tells herself: "Up, then, Medea, spare not the secrets of thy art in plotting and devising, on to the danger" (215). After Ageus' exit, Medea continues to make her plans, providing for the details of the poisoned gift to her enemies (218). Her plans include the slaying of her children, revealing a violent, somehow distorted, nature.[59]

Another characteristic of Medea is her ability to represent. It becomes evident in her second dialogue with Jason, in which she plays the role of a repentant woman, in search of his favor: "Jason, I crave thy pardon for the words I spoke, and well thou mayest brook my burst of passion, for ere now we twain have shared much love" (219). Her words conceal her true intentions and exemplify her ironic personality: "Ah! poor heart! why am I thus distraught, why so angered 'gainst all good advice, why have I come to hate the rulers of the land, my husband too, who does the best for me he can, in wedding with a princess and rearing for my children noble brothers?" (219). And Jason is convinced of her sudden change "to wiser schemes" and "better course, late though it be; this is acting [my emphasis] like a woman of sober sense" (219). Ironically, he was right, she was acting. Suddenly, she starts to cry. It calls his attention: "But thou, lady, why with fresh tears dost thou thine eyelids wet...?"(219). And Medea confesses the real reason of her tears, the children: "upon these children my thoughts were turned" (220), their future, their destiny. She is speaking truly and lying at the same time: she is speaking the truth in the sense that she is concerned about the future of the children, but she is lying because she is cheating Jason, who does not suspect of her plans to kill the children. Jason thinks Medea is concerned with the children's life, but she is crying because of the children's death.[60]

Psychologically speaking, Medea is the best developed character of the play, ranging from hesitation to certainty, from tears to laughter, from humiliation to self-affirmation. She is in a crisis and has to make a decision, experiencing inner conflicts as well as external ones. Medea

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(Frye 208-9).

[59] Indeed, Medea was a woman under pressure. According to Lesky, she kills her children in order to save them from the hands of the Corinthians (222). Medea "swears that she will never abandon her children to the revenge of the enemies" (223). Carlinda Nuñez agrees with this opinion, seeing Medea's crime as a heroic act, a question of mercy and despair.

[60] Lesky sees Medea as a divided character, in whom the maternal feelings are in conflict with her passion (226). However, Medea has arrived at the point from which there is no return, the killing of the children has become a "necessity."

moves above the level of morality, transcending the ethical limitations of a common person, going beyond right and wrong, maybe because she is directed by passion.[61] Therefore, a moral lesson becomes very ambiguious in the play. Apparently, Medea, as a heroine, seems to lack the moral balance of the common individual.[62] Her blinding passion and her wish of vengeance disturb her notion of values.

Another important aspect of the play is related to structure. **Medea** has a very complex and controlled structure. The point of attack of the play is the very moment in which Medea, having been betrayed by Jason, is going to be banished from the city of Corinth. The Nurse comes from the house, reports all the main events and describes the characters of the play: Jason's travels through the Symplegades, the arrival of Medea in Corinth, her love for Jason, the betrayal of their love by Jason, therefore "now their love is all turned to hate" (212). The Nurse also informs about Medea's mood, lamenting her deplorable condition—fasting, grieving, crying. She also refers to the change of her attitude toward her children: "... she hates her children now and feels no joy at seeing them" (212). This aversion toward the children is going to be fundamental in the play, considering the future events. Everything is set for the further advances of the plot.

As the other characters enter the stage and perform their parts, secondary conflicts are presented, complicating the story. The Attendant comes, for example, bringing Medea's children, and bringing also news about Medea's banishment from the city (212). The presence of the children on the stage affects the audience emotionally, for they can see the object of Medea's love and hatred. Medea's loud lamentations resound in the air and the Attendant asks for their cause. In her answer, the Nurse suggests that there is much more suffering to come, for "the mischief is but now beginning; it has not reached its climax yet" (212).[63] This commentary generates a certain expectation towards the events soon to come, thus enhancing the tension. Before the

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[61] "Se o coração humano é o grande laboratório do trágico, a Moira em Eurípedes deixa de ter sentido e é substituida pelos transbordamentos afetivos e pela *amartia*, isto é, falta, erro desmando, oriundos das paixões" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 60).

[62] "Medea's appearance as a heroic figure, as the murderer of her children who escapes the consequences of her actions, apparently with the blessing of the gods, must have seemed to the audience surprising beyond description" (Knox 279).

[63] In fact, suffering is a central element in Euripides. Brandão calls him the champion of bitterness, showing no external break with tradition, but internally suggesting a new attitude, searching for a "retorno a um mundo imaginário, onde o sofrimento e a dor não se justificam mais" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 58).

Attendant leaves the stage, the Nurse gives him an advice that foreshadows future events in the play: keep the children away from their mother "and bring them not near their mother in her evil hour. For ere this have I seen her eyeing them savagely, as though she were minded to do them some hurt, and well I know she will not cease from her fury till she have pounced on some victim" (213). This information gives a portrayal of Medea at the same time that it prepares the audience for the scenes to come. As Medea comes from the house, her first words confirm the Nurse's suspicion: "Curse you and your father too, ye children damned, sons of a doomed mother! Ruin seize the whole family!" (213). The Chorus also comes, attracted by Medea's loud cries, evincing the sympathy of the Corinthian women for the suffering of Medea as well as reinforcing the main conflicts of the play.

Creon comes, adding new elements to the play's action. He announces directly Medea's banishment from the city (214); and this complicates the situation, deepening the suffering of the heroine. The dialogue between Creon and Medea offers some foreshadowings about future events, as well as developing Medea's characterization. Creon foresees some terrible menace in relation to his daughter: "I fear thee,—no longer need I veil my dread 'neath words,—lest thou devise against my child some cureless ill" (214). As the dialogue progresses, Creon's love of his daughter becomes more evident, contrasting with Medea's love of her children. For Creon, the love of his children is above his love of the city (215). For Medea, the love of her children is not above the love of herself.[64]

Aegeus' fortuitous entrance finds no logic or preparation. He is there on the stage not because of Medea or Jason, or Creon. Aegeus is in Corinth because of an oracle; he went there to consult the oracles about his infertility, and just happened to pass by (217-8). Fortunately, Medea is powerful in sorceries, and promises to help him. This accidental, totally artificial visit affords Medea a future escape. It also gives room for Medea to offer a new report on her sufferings, reaffirming the main conflict of the play: Jason's betrayal. The presence of Aegeus confirms

[64] Although, it is possible to understand the killing of the children as an act of mercy by a desperate mother who sees her children being disinherited, dishonored, and menaced with exile. Carlinda Nuñez defends this position. Knox disagrees with this interpretation. He suggests that Medea "surpasses the bounds of normal human conduct" and is totally dominated by passion (292). Schlesinger reinforces the position that Medea acted out of "necessity," according to the Greek notion of *anankê* (295). Since that Creon and his daughters were dead, Medea's children were to be considered murderers in the eyes of the Corinthians: "By letting them hve I shall only deliver them to the vengeance of my enemies. The deed has inevitably sealed their doom" (Schlesinger 296).

Medea's ability as a plotter and furthers the action of the play. Aegeus' agreement with Medea is confirmed with an oath, which contrasts with Jason's breaking his oath to Medea (218), his fidelity also contrasts with Jason's infidelity; yet his craving for children of his own also contrasts with Medea's future killing of her own.

After Aegeus' exit, Medea thinks carefully and prepares for her vengeance (218-9). This long part foreshadows all the scenes to come in the play, preparing the audience for the several stages of Medea's vengeance. The plan is defined, Medea's intent is confirmed, the action of the play is established. She counts on the complicity of the Nurse and the Chorus in order to execute her plans. The Chorus tries to convince Medea not to perform her bloody deed (219). This enhances the conflict experienced by Medea. The children are going to give the bride Medea's gift. The irony of the situation is evident, death being inflicted through a gift, taken by innocent children (220). Medea pretends to "aid" Jason in his task of begging the king's mercy for the children, but in fact she is going to betray him and kill him. The song of the Chorus enhances this contradiction: a golden crown bringing death.

The Attendant comes to bring Medea the news about the children: they are free from exile, the bride accepted their gifts (220). But, ironically, instead of bringing relief for the success of the plan, the news raises a cry of despair and pain from Medea's heart: "Ah me!" (220). She is conscious of the implications of the events next to occur. Medea cries, but she does not stop: "O my babes, my babes, let your mother kiss your hands. Ah! hands I love so well, O lips most dear to me!" (221). She enters the house with the children. After the Messenger's report on the death of Creon and his daughter, Medea hesitates but enters the house, decided to kill the children. They are murdered outside the stage, but their voices are heard, i. e., the scene is not reported by a third character (222). This is the most pathetic scene of the play, the most heavily burdened with emotion, triggering pity and fear. Then Jason comes and quarrels for the last time with Medea. The dénouèment follows: Medea is rescued by a chariot drawn by dragons, saved (223-4).

The Chorus is another fundamental element of the play, maybe less central than it was in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, but still a useful device for characterization. The Chorus shows sympathy for Medea's suffering, using religious references, praying to Zeus, to the godess Earth, for light, thus joining Medea in her prayer (213). It also laments Medea's banishment from the city: "Ah! poor lady, woe is thee! Alas, for thy sorrows! What protection, what home or

country to save thee from thy troubles will thou find? O Medea, in what a hopeless sea of misery heaven hath plunged thee!" (215).

After Medea's soliloquy, the Chorus sings a song about the crisis of the universe, the reversal of the order in society, the subversion of old values and oaths: "Gone is the grace that oaths once had" (215), suggesting the change that the Greek society was experiencing at the time, a crisis of ethics, religion, and identity, the disintegration of social order in "Hellas" (215).[65] After Medea's first quarrel with Jason the Chorus meditates on the excess of "Love," the lack of moderation and chastity, the excess of jealousy and the compulsion of "mad desire for unlawful love" (217). The Chorus also reveals the fear that Cypris, the goddess of love, could bring the same torment to it. The song expresses also the fear of being "an outcast from my city" (217); it is better to die than to live in exile, abandoned by friends, the most terrible punishment to any person.

The Chorus also establishes a brief interaction with Medea, trying to convince her not to transgress the law, not to murder her own children, because it would cause her more sadness. After that, the Chorus exalts the Athenian society, culture, religion, and poetic inspiration, revealing its perplexity: how can this city of justice and harmony receive such a criminal as Medea, a murderer of kings and of her own children? (219). How can the land of wisdom give refuge to someone so unjust? How can the city of harmony give assistance to the creator of such a disorder?

The leader of the Chorus talks to Medea after the third song, showing sympathy and also foreshadowing the killing of the children. When Medea bids her children farewell and the Attendant leads them into the house, Medea cries and the Leader of the Chorus cries with her: "From my eyes too burst forth the copious tears; O, may no greater ill than the present e'ver befall!" (219), lamenting the inevitability of what is to come to the children: "Gone, gone is every hope I had that the children yet might live; forth to their doom they now proceed" (220). The song mourns the innocence of the children who became instruments of vengeance and death, the disgrace of the bride who will be tempted "to put on the robe and crown of gold" and die because

[65] According to Carlinda Nuñez, Medea reflects a violently changing society. She needs to adjust herself to the new times. She portrays "um impasse que não é exclusivamente seu, mas de toda uma sociedade que tem de lidar com transformações profundas, sem ter tido tempo de assimilá-las e a seus desdobramentos" (170).

of their poison, and the ignorance of Jason, who does not know the extent of his fall or the sorrows of Medea, who is going to kill her own children (220).

The Chorus appears again at the moment in which Medea kisses and embraces her children, in hesitation and pain, being about to kill them. The song remarks on the great responsibility and tribulation of having children and taking care of their education and upbringing. The Chorus tells about how difficult it is for women with children to live in happiness (221). And when Medea finally enters the house, the Chorus laments deeply: "O earth, O sun whose beam illumines all, look, look upon this lost woman..." (222). The children cry from within the house, the Chorus answers with helpless cries and hesitation: "Didst hear, didst hear the children's cry? O lady, born to sorrow, victim of an evil fate! Shall I enter the house?" (222). It is the climax, confusing and noisy. The children are killed. Jason comes out and the Chorus tells him about the misery that fell over his family. Medea appears then in a chariot in the air with the corpses of the children (224).

Tension is evident throughout the play, for its main conflict turns around Medea's wrath and vengeance against Jason, which will be materialized in the killing of his children and Creon's daughter. Even in the exposition of the play, attention is focused on the threat against Medea's children, the way Medea looks at them, with no joy (212). The murderous nature of Medea, suggested in the beginning of the play, is confirmed scene after scene. Minor conflicts are also presented, like the menace of banishment of Medea: is she really going to be banished? This tension is soon relieved when Creon comes to announce officially Medea's banishment.

Tension is enhanced by constant references to Medea's potentiality for doing evil to her own family. Thus the commentary of the Nurse reinforces tension: "At least may she turn her hand against her foes, and not against her friends" (213). The Chorus comes to give Medea consolation and advice "ere she do some mischief." What kind of mischief can she perform? How profound and destructive can her passion be? The audience is kept prepared and attentive to the main concern of the story: Medea's vengeance. She is a betrayed woman and "no heart is filled with deadlier thoughts than hers" (214). This bloody commentary reinforces tension. Creon's visit also confirms Medea's potentiality for evil (214), her capacity for doing harm to other people.[66]

[66] Medea experiences the limits of human suffering and joy. Her anguish is intense, her passion strong, her situation

The play develops many themes, but there is a central one: the dangers of passionate love, of love that goes out of control and overreaches reason. The play exemplifies how human "love is all turned to hate" (212). But there are other themes related to lack of control, like the excess of indignation for the misdeeds of men. The place of women in society is another very important theme developed by the play. Medea disagrees with and denies those social and cultural impositions. She laments the inferior condition of women in a society governed by men, dominated by men all the time, father or husband. She meditates on the life of a wife, how it demands resistance, ability, and supernatural power—"a diviner's eyes to see how best to treat the partner of her life" (214). She is the heroine who can overcome all the impositions and injustices experienced by woman. When Jason alludes to the profits of his marriage to Creon's daughter, she declares emphatically that "prosperity, whose end is woe, [may] ne'er be mine nor such wealth as would ever sting my heart!" (217). Thus Medea points out to ethical values that are beyond circumstancial opportunism, and even refuses Jason's offer of letters of recommendation to his friends abroad: "a villain's gifts can bring no blessing" (217).

However, Medea reinforces some of the sexist labels posted on women, showing how dangerous a woman can be when "her honour [is] wronged" (214), or when she plays the role of a sorcerer, or when she uses artcraft and subtlety to achieve her vengeance, exalting the superiority of woman for possessing those evil supernatural abilities. She also confirms the so-called malignant nature of women by killing the king, his daughter, and her own children: "we women, though by nature little apt for virtuous deeds, are most expert to fashion any mischief" (215).[67] Her falsehood is also shown when she cheats Creon and Jason, with tears and sweet words.

Nonetheless, instead of confirming the sexism of society which views women as inferior to men, she considers women superior in ability and intelligence. This is evident in her long discussion with Jason and shown by herself, in her great intelligence, total conscience and control over situations and over all the other characters of the play. She even dominates her wrath in order to perform vengeance according to reason, and her motherly instinct to execute her "untoward scheme" (212).

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extreme, her actions radical. Therefore, her attitude is heroic.

[67] Junito Brandão recognizes that there is a tradition according to which Euripides is seen as a misogynistic playwright. However, Brandão disagrees with this idea and argues that Euripides was rather a realistic poet (**Teatro**

The play also develops the theme of the family, its link with state affairs. Because Jason "bears no longer any love to this family" (212) and abandons it, the city is in danger. In fact tragedy is a historical phenomenon which occurs in V century Greece involving a society that becomes conscious of itself and which discusses the changes in itself, using the myths of the past to discuss problems and concerns of the present time, artistically. Through their tragedies, societies had the chance to elaborate and question their on cultural identity and social institutions. Vernant says very accurately:

> A matéria da tragédia não é mais então o sonho, posto como uma realidade humana estranha à história, mas o pensamento social próprio da cidade no século V, com as tensões, as contradições que surgem nela, quanto a chegada do direito e as instituições da vida política questionam no plano religioso e moral, os antigos valores tradicionais: estes mesmos que a lenda heróica exaltava, donde a tragédia toma seus temas e suas personagens, não mais para glorificá-los, como o fazia ainda a poesia lírica, mas para discuti-los publicamente, em nome de um ideal cívico, diante dessa espécie de assembléia ou de tribunal populares que é um teatro grego. (Vernant e Vidal-Naquet 65)

In **Medea** the relation between husband and wife is discussed, the power of parents over the children, the question of vengeance and justice, and love and passion.

The play also touches the question of human honesty: honor, fidelity, and how ethical values should be respected in society. In the dialogue between the Nurse and the Attendant, for example, the Nurse comments on how Jason had "proved a very traitor to his nearest and dearest" (212-3), and the Attendant, in answer, comments that this tendency to infidelity is part of man's nature: "And who 'mongst men is not? Art learning only now, that every single man cares for himself more than for his neighbour, some from honest motives, others for mere gain's sake?" (213).

The question of justice is also present in the play. The Chorus appeals constantly to moderation and balance (213), thus suggesting that justice should be tempered by tolerance. It also says that "Zeus will judge 'twixt" Medea and Jason (213). As the story progresses, however, Medea, not the Furies, is the one who punishes the offender, and she escapes without punishment. Surprisingly, the gods' intervention in her favour seems to put justice in the hands of a passionate woman who acts without moderation or benevolence. Her killing of the children (an off-stage

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Grego 65).

scene) is the antithesis of a holy sacrifice, it is an anti-sacrifice for the sake of vindication and not of justification, since her deed does not bring justice but creates a still greater injustice.

The play is very rich in terms of spectacle, having all the ingredients necessary to cause great impact upon the audience, using many visual and sonorous devices. The scenery is Medea's house in Corinth, described as having "double gates" (213) and situated near the palace of Creon, and the characters move into and out of it (212). At the end of the play, when Medea is already in the air, looking downward, she refers to "those doors" as being shaken by Jason and his attendants (223). The scenery conveys an urban atmosphere, obviously centred on the Helenic culture.[68]

There is a lot of movement, with several entrances and exits. The play starts with the sudden entrance of the Nurse, lamenting Medea's disgrace, presenting the main conflicts and the main characters. The entrance of the Chorus, composed of fifteen women representing the Corinthian women, is in itself a spectacle. The Chorus will never leave the orchestra, observing with the audience, commenting on all the scenes of the play, sometimes interacting with the other characters. It is the Chorus which announces the entrance of Creon, accompanied probably by his servants and guards, wearing royal clothes and adornments, to formally announce Medea's banishment from the land (214).

In a moment of great commotion, Medea takes the children into the house and waits. The Chorus then, with a moving song, tries to convince her not to kill the children, conveying the gestures of kneeling and imploring: "Nay, by thy knees we, one and all, implore thee, slay not thy babes" (219). The gesture of fifteen women kneeling before Medea could create a very impressive scene, mainly considering that they were dancing as well as singing. After the Messenger's exit, Medea enters the house, this time to kill her children; therefore her depart from the stage is heavy, determined, full of significance: "... I am a lady of sorrows" (222). As she murders the children they cry off-stage, referring to their "mother's blows" and to "the toils of the sword... closing round [them]" (222).

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[68] Presumably, the servants of the house and other slaves are characterized by appropriate clothes, important visual indicators of their social class. Even the Nurse's condition as a foreigner could be conveyed by her dressing. It is important to remember that the theater of the time used masks and long boots (*cothurni*), which deformed the appearance of the characters and could enhance the differences among them.

In the last scene, Jason enters the stage with his attendants in search of Medea and she makes the most spectacular apparition of the play, above the house, in a chariot drawn by dragons (223). With the use of some sort of machine (the *deus ex-machina*), Medea is literally placed above the other characters, while the chariot takes her away.

The inner suffering of Medea is made visible mainly through language but also by the use of appropriate masks. According to the Nurse "she lies fasting, yelding her body to her grief, wasting away in tears" at home (212). The Nurse also speaks of her "snow-white neck" (212), of "wild fancies" that stirr her heart (213). She refers to Medea's way of looking at other characters: the way she looks at her children, "For ere this have I seen her eyeing them savagely" (213); and the way she "glares upon her servants with the look of a lioness with cubs" (213). Jason also gives some indication of Medea's physical appearance when, in their second dialogue, he refers to her "fresh tears" that wash her eyelids and to her "wan cheek" (219). The masks could convey psychological states, aided by marks in the body, tone of voice, and gestures.[69] They could also provide for the visual identification some characters, like the Attendant, a greybearded old man (212) and the Nurse, an "aged dame" (213). The most interesting and significative reference to costume is related to the gifts that Medea offered to Jason's bride, which would be carried by her children: "a robe of finest tissue and a chaplet of chased gold" (220). The image of the gifts shown by the servant and the significance of them as receptacles of death surelly impress the audience.

As important as the visual elements, the aural elements are very rich and well explored in Euripides' **Medea**. The first sound to be heard is the voice of the Nurse in her solitary lament (212). As the play moves on, other voices are added, the old Attendant, the children, the Chorus of Corinthian women. The voices of characters in dialogue are interweaved by songs of the Chorus, and by moments of silence, according to the exit of some characters, as when Medea leaves the stage in order to kill her children, a moment of tension and fear.

An interesting effect is achieved at the beginning of the play, when Medea's harsh cries chanted from within the house interrupt the Nurse's conversation with the children: "'Tis as I

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[69] "A máscara de teatro é uma sobrevivência, um aperfeiçoamento e um verdadeiro retoque das máscaras que sempre foram usados no culto dionisíaco. Fabricada de trapos embebidos em gesso ou barro pastoso, eram modeladas em formas, recebendo por fim a pintura. Adpatava-se-lhe, quando necessário, como na máscara trágica, uma cabeleira postiça e uma barba" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Origem e Evolução** 81).

said, my dear children; wild fancies stir your mother's heart, wild fury goads her on" (213). It produces a striking effect, a voice sounding from off the stage. As the children move into the house, Medea keeps crying, and her voice resounding off stage mingles with the cries of the Nurse, lamenting on the stage: "Ah me! ah me! the pity of it! Why, pray, do thy children share their father's crime?" (213).

Another very interesting sound device is the dialogue sung between the Chorus, the Nurse, and Medea from within the house (213-4). The song starts with the Chorus' observation:

> I hear the voice, uplifted loud, of our poor Colchian lady, nor yet is she quiet, aged dame, for I stood by the house with double gates I heard a voice of weeping from within, and I do grieve, lady, for the sorrows of this house, for it hath won my love. (213)

It is a song sung by three, lamenting the sort of one, invoking the mercy of all gods. They pray that Zeus may hear the sound of lament, "the piteous note of woe the hapless wife is uttering" (213). The Nurse asks the Chorus: "Do ye hear her words, how loudly she adjures Themis...?" (213). The volume of Medea's lament is loud, the pitch is high. The Nurse even questions the Chorus about the impotence of music, how it is so well adapted to festive occasions and so useless to comfort a suffering person. It would be a "gain," says the Nurse "to heal men's wounds by music's spell" (213). But, in answer, the Chorus calls attention again to the bitter and loud "cry of lamentation! loudly, bitterly" of Medea (213).

When the Messenger comes to announce the death of the king and his daughter, his voice fills the air with a high volume and reverberates in the audience: "Fly, fly, Medea! who hast wrought an awful deed, transgressing every law: nor leave behind or sea-borne bark or car that scours the plain" (221). The screams of the Messenger foreshadow the way Medea is going to escape in the last scene, through the air. And when Medea's reaction is of happiness and not of sorrow, the Messenger becomes amazed and cries: "Ha! What? Art sane? Art not distraught, lady, who hearest with joy the outrage to our royal house done, and art not at the horrid tale afraid?" (221). Then the Messenger's voice dominates the stage in his long report about the death of Creon and his daughter (221-2).

When Medea is going to perform her most terrible crime, her voice resounds: "O heart of mine, steel thyself! Why do I hesitate to do the awful deed that must be done? Come, take the sword, thou wretched hand of mine!" (222). When she enters the house, the noisiest scene of the

play takes place: the killing of the children. The Chorus sings, crying on the stage, denouncing the lack of balance of the moment, the reversal of the order: "the blood of gods is in danger of being shed by man" (222). The last scene of the play is also full of noise, Jason's soldiers trying to open the doors of the house, Medea and Jason discussing, Medea flying in a chariot, mutual accusations and curses, laments, with lines becoming shorter and shorter: "O my, dear, dear children!" (224).

Of course, besides all the noises of the play, there is the important participation of the Chorus with its songs.[70] Besides suggesting moral lines of conduct, it helps to create the atmospheres of pain, sympathy, suffering, fear, solidarity, prayer, reinforcing the emotional effect of the play, completing the impressions caused by words and actions. Euripides seems to have had a clear notion of theatre as spectacle, therefore he used a lot of movement, sound, emotion, exits, entrances, surprises. The music of the Chorus either intensifies the emotion of the tense scenes or gives relief, bringing sonorous harmony to the play, suggesting maybe that there is still harmony in the universe. It is important to remember that dance by the Chorus was part of the convention, so that the spectacle was complete: words, music, rhythm, and body movement.

Comparing Euripides' **Medea** to Aristotle's **Poetics**, it is possible to see that Euripides' notion of *mimesis* confirms Aristotle's view of representation, of a creative apprehension of reality. The myth was very well known by the audience, and the dramatist used it as reference to his drama, imitating the basic elements of the legend. But Euripides' work was not a mere copy of what the tradition offered. In fact, he recreated some elements of the myth, proving that his play was a representation of the legend with a refined treatment. Thus, according to the tradition, Medea's childen were killed by the citizens of Corinth, but according to Euripides' perspective Medea kills her own children. Euripides' objective could be to give more dramatic tension to the play and enhance its pathos, or to emphasize Medea's cruelty, revealing perhaps his own misogyny.[71] The play also presents a very unified plot, centered on Medea's character and

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[70] Differently from Aeschylus and Sophocles, the Chorus in Euripides is not an independent character in the play, but an artifice that helps to comment on the action (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 59).

[71] Medéia: "O acontecimento central, aqui, o assassínio dos filhos pela mãe, foi inventado por Eurípides; em versões mais remotas da história, eram mortos pelo povo de Corinto... Eurípides altera completamente o mito—e a sua idéia não foi, como alguns produtores modernos parecem julgar, criar um papel para uma "estrela" trágica, nem sequer escrever um estudo psicológico bastante improvável, mas mostrar como é destruidora, tanto para o que sofre os efeitos imediatos, como para a sociedade em geral, a paixão que a razão não domina" (Kitto **Os Gregos** 335).

suffering, according to the rules of cause and consequence. At the end, however, Medea is saved by a chariot provided by Helios, after killing her children, and her enemies. Aristotle criticized the expedient of the *deus ex-machina*, an expedient that breaks the rule of necessity and probability, an irrational element disturbing the rationality of the plot (Aristotle 44).

Medea, the protagonist, is a very human character, very distant from the gods. Her virtues are her intelligence, her ability to handle sorcery, prophecy, and her command of language. She has a very strong personality, a very strong will, and a great passion for her husband and children. However, according to Junito de Souza Brandão, Medea does not fit the Aristotelian principle of the hero as the one who is in the middle, not too good and not too bad. For Brandão, Medea does not confirm the theory of Aristotle in this particularity of portraying the hero as a good, balanced person (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 63-4). His opinion is right, for Medea exceeds in her bitterness, in her wish for vengeance, in her passion for her man, in her search for justice. The *hamartia* committed by Medea should be related to some of her fundamental inner characteristics: her excessive love of Jason, her sense of dignity and her wish for justice.[72] However her *peripety*—her punishment, the loss of her husband, her expulsion from Corinth—seems to come before her *hamartia.* And what was her mistake? The killing of her brother, leaving her native land, loving Jason? Maybe each one of those elements contributed to her terrible situation. In fact, Medea's virtues are ambiguous, altered because of her lack of balance.[73] She exaggerates in everything, and many qualities when exaggerated become defects—an Aristotelian concept.[74] Thus, bravery becomes imprudence, prudence becomes cowardice, and Medea's passionate love becomes hatred.[75] However, some of heroic qualities can be perceived in Medea's virtues as the protagonist, like her sense of fidelity and her honor, her capacity for understanding her situation and acting with wit and intelligence (Euripides 217). She is not

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[72] Em Ésquilo, "a dicotomia trágica não é mais *deus e homem*, mas que ambos residem no íntimo do ser humano. Em Eurípedes, *Moira* foi substituída por *Éros*" (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 70).

[73] Aristotle, in his **Ethics**, comments on how the lack of balance can destroy moral excellence. "Consideramos primeiro, então, que a excelência moral é constituída, por natureza, de modo a ser destruída pela deficiência e pelo excesso, tal como vemos acontecer com o vigor e a saúde..." (Aristóteles **Ética a Nicômacos** 37).

[74] For Aristotle, moral virtue is related to the balance between feeling and action, "a disposition to choose, consisting essentially in a mean relatively to us determined by a rule, i. e., by the rule by which a practically wise man would determine it" (Ross 202).

[75] In fact, "Aristotle distinguishes between hatred and anger in this way: hatred (*misos*) is directed against classes of people, such as thieves; while anger (*orge*) is directed against particular persons who are perceived as causing pain (**Rhetoric** II.iv.31).

perfect, but she possesses virtues. She is very human, in the sense that the audience can be identified with her frailty, her passion, and her wish for revenge, although her cruelty suggests that her malignity is unique.[76]

Medea's *hybris* seems to be her uncontrollable passion, the anger that rules her heart (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Tragédia e Comédia** 60). The Chorus, at the beginning of the play, advises her not to exceed in her laments and her wish for vengeance, saying: "Zeus will judge 'twixt thee and him herein. Then mourn not for thy husband's loss too much, nor waste thyself away" (Euripides 213). Later in the play it says: "When in excess and past all limits Love doth come, he brings not glory or repute to man; but if the Cyprian queen in moderate might approach, no goddess is so full of charm as she" (217). All her emotions and feelings are out of proportion, beyond the Greek *métron*: her love, her jealousy, her fury, and her wrath. The Chorus can even wonder, at the beginning of the play: "Would that she would come forth for us to see, and listen to the words of counsel we might give, if haply she might lay aside the fierce fury of her wrath, and her temper stern" (213). The Nurse laments Medea's fate and attributes it to her "proud pump," her lack of moderation, to the "greatness that doth o'erreach itself" and brings no blessing but punishment and penalty for the family (213). Since the beginning of the play, she seems to be aware of Medea's dangerous personality (212).

It is very difficult to identify Medea's mistake, her *hamartia*. It should be related to some of her fundamental inner characteristics, to her *hybris*. It should also cause peripety. The only visible peripety she undergoes is the loss of her husband to another woman and the expulsion from Corinth, which precede the murders she commits. Thus, in this case, the murders are not her *hamartia* and the latter would then be related to earlier events: the killing of her brother, her leaving her native land, and her love of Jason. But the play is centered on her revenge, not on her fall. Besides, the gods protect her so that one wonders whether peripety can be properly applied to her. It is true that, just when she is planning her vengeance against the house of Creon, she receives the news that she is going to be expelled from the city of Corinth (Euripides 214). Thus, when she is waiting for success, comes the sudden reversal of her expectations and things become more complicated for her. Still, her staying in Corinth wouldn't necessarily have brought back

[76] According to Lígia Militz Costa e Maria Luiza Ritzel Remédios, Euripides' heroes are typical because of their origin and nature—low social classes, women, slaves, and peasants (Costa 19). Medea was a woman, and not Greek,

her husband to her. She might have spared her children's life, but probably not recovered her status. And if peripety is questionable, there seems to be a problem in the play structure, in Aristotelian terms. From another perspective, Medea's *hamartia* may lie in her resisting fate and the power of masculine society, in affirming her rights as a woman, questioning tradition and reverting the natural order. As the Chorus says, after listening to Medea's plans of vengeance: "Back to their source the holy rivers turn their tide. Order and the universe are being reversed" (215), since men are proved to be treacherous and faithless, and women to be strong and vindictive. She commits a well-planned, horrible crime, with refinements of cruelty that nothing can justify, unless one accepts the possibility that she killed her children in order to save them from the city's hatred.

To say the least, *nemesis* is as ambiguous as *hamartia* in this play, since the gods help Medea in the end, instead of punishing her. In fact, there seems to be no *nemesis* for Medea's crime. The gods even help her to escape from punishment. There is a logical reasoning here: if there is no *hamartia*, there can not be *nemesis*. Clearly, the loss of her husband and status was considered enough to punish her for whatever mistakes she had commmitted. And even at the end of the play, lamenting Medea's tragic situation, the Chorus says: "Woe is thee! how art thou fallen from thy high estate!" (220). And the awful crimes the spectator has just watched seem to be underrated by the gods.

At the very beginning of the play Medea, in her first appearance, laments her unhappiness, recognizing her doom. Thus apparently the play begins with her peripety and *anagnorisis*. However, even *anagnorisis* is difficult to identify in Medea's actions: she blames Jason or destiny, not herself.

The element of *pathos*, the scene of intense suffering, can be identified at the end of the play, when Medea's children are murdered by their mother. The shocking element of blood relation, the fact of the victims being children, and the lack of plausible reasons for the act intensify the *pathos* of the scene.[77]

The Attendant, the Nurse, and the Chorus keep pitying Medea's fate throughout the play, something that eliminates the possibility of attributing to Euripides any aims concerning either

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but a Barbarian, a foreigner.

[77] However, the element of pathos can be seen throughout the play in Medea's conflicting situation.

the criticism of his society in relation to impunity or of the gods' blind justice. Their pity seems to be triggered by a sense of love, of sympathy for Medea and for her family. The Chorus appeals to Zeus: "Didst hear, O Zeus, thou earth, and thou, O light, the piteous note of woe the hapless wife is uttering?" (Euripides 213). The Chorus pities Medea because her suffering is undeserved, the punishment is too hard to be acceptable—to be expelled from the city because of her constant yellings and complaints for justice—, and Jason was for sure the guilty one:

> ... This speech, O Jason, has thou with specious
> art arranged; but yet I think—albeit in saying
> so I betray indiscretion—that thou hast sinned
> in casting over thy wife. (217)

However, it is really difficult to pity Medea, because her reasons for killing the children are weak and the coldness in which she perpetrated her planned vengeance prevents any easy sympathy. Besides her escape unpunished also makes difficult the sense of pity. We do pity the pathetic innocent suffering of the children, but not the condition of the mother.

When Medea sees her own children and is close to killing them according to her plans, she shows fear. She bids them farewell and laments: "Ah me! how new to tears am I, how full of fear!" (Euripides 219). The Chorus confirms the emotional intensity of the scene, with laments and outcries of terror. So the emotions of fear and pity are present in this play—in the plot, in the characters and in the audience—, confirming Aristotle's principles. In spite of Medea's final successful escape, her situation is still pitiful and tragic, though in a psychological sense. She is a victim of her own passion. There is a sense that this situation, the possibility of being blinded by jealousy and passion, could happen to any other human being.[78] As the audience identifies with Medea, they experience this sense of fear, of menace, the sensation that emotions can lead to destruction, that our love can be transformed into hatred and bring ruin to our lives and families.

The experience of *catharsis* is very problematic in Euripides' play.[79] However, by experiencing pity for Medea's terrible fate, and fearing that the same could happen to any other

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[78] "Is there no sense in which I can fear for Oedipus as I see him rushing headlong, though totally unaware, into destruction? There is indeed a sense in which I can, I can imagine what I would feel like if I were in Oedipus' place, *with the knowledge I now possess*.... But it is a fear for myself which is based on seeing myself as someone relatively similar to Oedipus.... Oedipus is not a person who *has* a character but is *himself* a character, a type, which we may recognize as a type to which we ourselves belong.... In recognizing Oedipus or Medea in ourselves we recognize that what can happen to that sort of person can happen to us as well" (Nehamas 302-3).

[79] For Carlinda, *catharsis* is not possible in **Medea**: "Neste sentido, a passagem meteórica dos Dióscuros substitui a *kátharsis* que leva à satisfação ou à liberação de energias, realimentando o protagonismo desta Electra, mais que

mortal, the spectator could experience a sense of release of those emotions. In the case of Medea's husband, Jason, the experience of *catharsis* is made possible by the satisfaction of seeing the crime being punished.

After this parallel between plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristotle's theory of tragedy as presented in his **Poetics**, I conclude that the plays confirm the basic principles of the Aristotelian theory, with some points of discordance. All the plays present unity of action, place, and time. **Prometheus Bound** and **Oedipus the King** are centered on a virtuous character who presents an attitude of *hybris*, commits a *hamartia*, and then suffers the *nemesis* of the gods. *Anagnorisis* and peripety are quite complicated in **Prometheus Bound** and in **Medea**. The protagonist of **Medea** cannot be named good, virtuous or balanced, although she possesses some qualities, like the force of her passion and her sense of dignity. At the end of the play, Medea, whose *hamartia* and peripety are dubious, escapes the *nemesis* of the gods, something which does not satisfy Aristotle's principles.

It is also possible to observe a historical change from Aeschylus to Euripides, from the very religious approach of **Prometheus Bound** to the very human portrayal of **Medea**. In Euripides, one can also observe the development of a notion of individuality, in which the individual shows more freedom of choice and resistance, more control over his own existence than in Aeschylus.[80] There is also a change in the function of the Chorus, less important in the Euripidean time.

In relation to the theatrical devices, I conclude that all the plays present great richness and complexity in the application of theatrical devices, displaying the sophistication and the masterliness of the Greek drama. Greek plays were successful as social and cultural phenomena mainly because they were real pieces of artcraft, accomplished according to the most sophisticated principles of aesthetics and poetics.

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qualquer outra, tributária da raiz indo-européia 'ulek', que gera em sânscrito 'ulka' e significa 'meteoro', 'incêndio'" (Nuñez 197).

[80] In Euripedes there is a change in tragedy, which becomes more individualistic, more distant from the eternal and universal themes, more interested in abnormal characters and romantic stories with thrilling scenes of escapes (Kitto **Os Gregos** 264).

Chapter III

Peter Shaffer's Tragedies

Having studied the Greek plays, I will direct my attention to the selected plays by Peter Shaffer, trying to analyze them according to their use of the theatrical devices and their relation to the principles of Aristotle. My interest is to see how they work both as plays and as tragedies.

[A] **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**

"Save you all. My name is Martin. I'm a soldier of Spain and that's it..." (Shaffer **Royal** 1). These are the first words of Old Martin, the character narrator of Shaffer's **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**. Martin comes to salute the audience, to introduce himself, and to present the basic elements of the play: the main characters, the subject-matter, the place and time, and the atmosphere. He can be both inside and outside the story. This is done through two different characters and actors—Young Martin and Old Martin, the narrator. Through this strategy the play presents at the same time two different places and two different times. Old Martin belongs to a time different from the rest of the story—he is old, rich, and frustrated. Young Martin belongs to the time of the incidents of the play; he is still full of dreams of courage and honour. They represent the two poles of the play, the two different moments of life: youth and experience, idealism and realism, optimism and pessimism.

The play begins with the organization of the group that is going to participate in Pizarro's expedition to the New World, recently discovered and still unknown. It presents Pizarro's humble origin, his unstable and skeptical personality, his frustration with national and idealistic values, his physical and psychological limitations. The group arrives at the New World, meets the Incas, the inhabitants of the place, and hijacks Atahuallpa, the Indian leader. The Spaniards kill 3.000 Indians. Pizarro meets Atahuallpa personally and identifies with him, starting a very delicate and tense relationship. For a moment, Pizarro seems to see in Atahuallpa the fulfillment of all his hopes of faith and divinity and rids himself of his disillusion. But this experience does not last

and Pizarro is left at the end of the play in total prostration and frustration. He is even more disillusioned. The harmonious society of the Incas is contrasted with the European society in which justice and honesty are not that evident, and greed is paramount. The play also enhances the religious differences between the two cultures. At the end, Atahuallpa is condemned and, in a very quick judgment, killed, but he is forced to be baptized first, before the execution. The cultural richness of the Incas disappears and all their treasures are stolen by the Spanish; innocence is lost, faith is replaced with disbelief. At the end of the play, Old Martin returns and informs about Pizarro's final days and the changes in his soul, his spiritual disillusionment and material prosperity, and the decadence of the life of the Peruvian people. The play ends with Atahuallpa dead at Pizarro's feet; the latter sings a sad song about a little finch caught in a trap.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun presents a great variety of theatrical conventions, very well manipulated, resulting in a total spectacle, offering a good text, a rich visual show enhancing and developing the text, sound devices and diversified music sound tracks creating an atmosphere of melancholy, terror, or simply beauty. In fact, in Shaffer's play the visual and aural aspects are not just accessories of the play-text; they are significant instruments the playwright uses in order to recreate the magic of drama.[81]

Notwithstanding the richness of the visual and aural ingredients of the play, language is treated with care by Peter Shaffer, who chose prose instead of the poetic form.[82] The play reproduces the colloquial language of the soldiers, including linguistic expressions that convey the social status and the personality of the characters. Thus Pizarro's men use conversational language, with slang and cursing, like Vascas—"You're pissing right!" (5)—, Rodas—"Just you catch Rodas marching through any pissing jungle!" (6)—, and Salinas—"Oh, shut your ape's face. Are you going to sit here for ever and pick fleas?" (6). The religious language is also present in characters such as Valverde. Although the play-text does not offer language in verse, there is a song sung by Atahuallpa and Pizarro full of images, metaphors, and similes:

You must not rob, O little finch.

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[81] "When violence occurs, as in **The Birthday Party** and in Edward Bond's **Saved** (1965), it seems pointless and arbitrary. So we do not, except in revivals of the classics, normally welcome a stage for tragedy to 'jet upon'. Peter Shaffer's **The Royal Hund of the Sun** (1964) was a startling exception, which left some of its audience uncomfortable" (Leech 80).

[82] John Russel Taylor recognizes Shaffer's refined use of language: "... the first thing you would have to say about both Bolt and Shaffer is that they are very literary sorts of dramatist. They believed from the outset in the advantages of the well-made play: a plot carefully laid out, with its exposition, its intricate pattern of information given to and withheld from the audience, its satisfactory denouement. They also believed that all this should be put into words" (Taylor "Art and Commerce" 179).

The harvest maize, O little finch.
The trap is set, O little finch.
To seize you quick, O little finch.

Ask that black bird, O little finch.
Nailed on a branch, O little finch.
Where is her heart, O little finch.
Where are her plumes, O little finch.

She is cut up, O little finch.
For stealing grain, O little finch.
See, see the fate, O little finch.
Of robber birds, O little finch. (52)

The play includes foreign expressions, Spanish names and words, Latin and Bible quotations, Indian sentences, words translated or not into English, although the official language of the play is supposed to be Spanish. The foreign words and phrases convey that the play is set in a remote place and time, making it more convincing, plausible, appropriate. It also reveals how language can be problematic and at the same time important. When Manco appears and starts a conversation with the Spanish, the Indian language is made evident; and Felipillo "interprets" the Spanish language (in fact English) (19). The Indian language is curiously helped by the artifice of mime, as if it were poor and too limited to be communicative by itself, although its speakers suggest a certain dignity and graveness.

Young Martin shows his great value in dominating two categories of language: written Spanish and the Indian language, becoming Pizarro's page and interpreter. Atahuallpa also dominates the foreign language, starting to learn and use Spanish with significant success: "I fight well—'ye-es'?" (58). Atahuallpa recognizes the importance of written language, in contrast with Pizarro's hard rejection of any change in his illiteracy (60). Young Martin justifies him, saying that "[a] soldier does not need it," but Atahuallpa perceives that "[a] King needs it" for the benefit of the people (60).

The Royal Hunt of the Sun is criticized by some as being poor in terms of dialogue and excessive in terms of visual and aural effects; some critics say "it was *too* spectacular, *too* lavish at the expense of dialogue and character" (Graham-Adriani ix). In fact, a great amount of the atmosphere of the play is conveyed by the music, the body movements, the sound and visual devices. Shaffer's play, however, does not despise the importance of dialogue, which is clear, logical, and touching. It also provides information of fundamental importance, as in the several talks between Pizarro and Atahuallpa. Dialogues enhance conflicts, expose ideologies, define

differences among the characters, and establish cultural diversity. Notwithstanding, Shaffer's play is not based entirely on the spoken word, constituting a more integral experience of theater, presupposing a change in emphasis, giving more value to gestures, visual effects, sound, and choreography.[83]

Dialogue represents an important instrument for moving the plot of the play, and conveying facts, like in Act I scene 5, the dialogue between Estete, the Royal Veedor, and de Candia, the Commander of Artillery, which offers much historical information: the number of Spanish soldliers (18), the trade mark of their gun (a Strozzi), the menace of the Indians around them, the continuous rain in the forest (16). At first sight, one can get the impression that the only objective of the dialogue is to provide information. But it also evinces an internal conflict in Pizarro's group, a conflict between loyalty to the King of Spain and personal ambition, fidelity and criticism, conveying the atmosphere of terror that hovers above the Spanish, the anguish about the silence of the Indians, and the irritation for the constant rain.

In the seventh scene of Act II, Shaffer achieves an interesting effect when he intercalates for a moment two pieces of conversation—Pizarro and de Soto's, Young Martin and Atahuallpa's (59-60). While Young Martin shows the written language to Atahuallpa, Pizarro gives orders to melt the golden objects brought by the Indians (60). Pizarro's personality as a rude and practical man is made evident by this order and by his disdain for the written language—"This is a foolish game" (60). The movement of the dialogue is very well paced, the speed is high, and the result is a very effective characterization of both Pizarro and Atahuallpa.

Although long dialogues and soliloquies are rare in the play, there is an example of a long speech by Pizarro, just after his nervous breakdown in front of Atahuallpa. He laments the destructive power of Time and Death against youth and life (62-3), announcing Atahuallpa's death soon to come (63). Besides developing the theme, characterizing Atahuallpa's persistent conviction of having a divine nature and Pizarro's rude skepticism, the dialogue provides historical and cultural details about the Indian funeral. Pizarro's concern is related to the inevitability of death: "Atahualllpa, I'm going to die! And the thought of that dark has for years rotted everything for me, all simple joy in life" (63). The dialogue offers a moment of deep reflection, a theological and metaphysical meditation. A melancholy, a depressed Pizarro is

[83] Dawson advises that, in theatre, "movement, gesture, properties and scenery are auxiliaries which, ideally speaking, should grow out of the creative language" (Dawson **Drama and the Dramatic** 8).

fascinated by the idea of Time and Death, and by the question of the meaning of life. In an existential crisis, there is no religious consolation for Pizarro's torment.

In **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, characterization is a very complex element involving many different conventions: the language of each character, the relationship between the characters, gestures, physical defects, costumes, masks, even visual and sound devices which reinforce traces of character, like all the light and the sound of musical instruments encircling Atahuallpa with an aura of divinity. But characters are mostly developed by the relationships they establish with each other. Old Martin, in the exposition of the play, presents Pizarro as "my altar, my bright image of salvation" (1), conveying all his admiration for him and enhancing his own naïvety, his infantile adoration of the hero, his immature idealism and passion for Pizarro. The personality of Martin is defined also by contrast with Pizarro's—Martin represents the cultivation of honour and idealism, while Pizarro represents commerce of values and skepticism (3).

The printed play-text presents a long stage direction just at the beginning of the play, suggesting how the character of Pizarro should be visually conveyed, how the actor should interpret it. Even the precise gestures, facial expressions, physical appearance, and costumes are conveyed:

> The gestures are blunt and often violent; the expression intense and energetic, capable of fury and cruelty, but also of sudden melancholy and sardonic humour. At the moment he appears more neatly than he is ever to do again: hair and beard are trimmed, and his clothes quite grand, as if he is trying to make a fine impression. (2)

It is clear that the playwright knows exactly what he wants to communicate. A critic, however, could wonder why these extra-textual commentaries are necessary if the text is well written, if the dialogues are clear and powerful. Well, many other celebrated playwrights of the twentieth century have done the same, like Bernard Shaw. It saves time for the director and actors, although it can limit the creative process of those involved in an actual production of the play.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun is divided into two parts only—"The Hunt" and "The Kill"—, and each part is divided into twelve scenes. There is no pause between the scenes, which follow each other immediately, as the author himself observes (Shaffer Author's Notes xii). For the reader of the play-text, for the student of literature, for the director, and for the actor, the division is clear, but the audience plunges into the flow of the story and cannot perceive precisely the division. The structure of the play is relatively simple, and the division suggests that the center of the play is the figure of Atahuallpa, his capture and killing. However, the play is also

centered on Pizarro's internal and external conflicts: his metaphysical preoccupations, his meeting Atahuallpa, and the peculiar relation of mutual trust they develop.

In the exposition scene, presented by Old Martin, the main characters are introduced, the place and time are conveyed, the atmosphere of disillusionment is created. The structure of the play follows the historical accounts of the conquest of Peru, the preparation for the expedition, the formation of the group under the leadership of Pizarro, the consecration of their weapons, their departure from Spain, the arrival in America, the climbing of the mountains, the capture and killing of Atahuallpa, the complex escape. Obviously, considering the difficulties of such a representation in the theatre, there is no scene of their voyage through the ocean. In the exposition part, the Narrator introduces himself and the most important conflicts, conveying the setting, Pizarro's infirmity and elements of his personality.

The climax of the play happens at the moment Pizarro undergoes the ethical dilemma of releasing Atahuallpa or not, followed by his collapse and surrender to the personality of Atahuallpa (the belief in his divine nature), Pizarro's loss of control over his men, his loss of authority, and Atahuallpa's killing.[84] After that, the hero falls over the body of the Inca, in tears and laments, as if the death of Atahuallpa represented his own death, or the death of the last hope of his life, the hope that the world could make sense, and that human beings could overcome the forces of time and death.[85] The scene presents the fall of Atahuallpa's life and kingdom, the fall of Pizarro's dignity and hope, followed by his recognition of the implications of the catastrophe in which he was involved.

The image of the bird functions as a symbol in the play, which has many references to birds: the cries of the birds in the forest, the song of the finch sung by Atahuallpa in the middle of the play and by Pizarro at the end. Atahuallpa himself represents the exotic bird that Pizarro must hunt. Even the cloaks Atahuallpa wears are made of feathers of birds (46). The cries of birds enhance the effect of the most important and tense scenes, like when the Spanish are at Cajamarca, surrounded by Indians at night and haunted by birds (15). Pizarro considers himself a free bird; but Atahuallpa catches his heart at the end. When Atahuallpa receives Pizarro's

[84] Nussbaum divides tragedy in four major types: 1) tragedy of impeded action (**Trojan Women**), in which the hero is impeded to act; 2) tragedy of involuntary action (**Oedipus the King**); 3) tragedy of ethical dilemma (**Agamemnon**) [an this is the case of **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**], in which there is a conflict between "two important obligations, in such a way that no innocent course is available" (Nussbaum 283); 4) and tragedy of the eroded character (**Hecuba**) [Shaffer's **Amadeus** and **Yonadab**], "Here circumstances do not only impede the heroine's action, they sap the inner structures of trust and motivation that make up her virtue" (284).

[85] Tragic suffering is the consequence of an act, it has an "ethical substance," responsibility, contribution, it's not mere external contingency. Tragedy is a conflict of "ethical substance" (Williams 33).

confession in an Indian ritual, Pizarro responds with a very unusual blessing, indicating that Atahuallpa's death was near and conveying the kind of intimate relation they had. It also suggests some sort of light hope Pizarro had of Atahuallpa's resurrection: "If any blessing is in me, take it and go. Fly up, my bird, and come to me again" (76). In the last scene of the play, Pizarro sings the song of the bird that fell in a trap, referring both to Atahuallpa's capture and death and to his own existential snare (79-80).

Contemporary drama does not have a Chorus to comment on and connect all the scenes, or to convey the emotional responses of the audience. However, **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** contains, through the figure of Old Martin, some sort of mediation between the story and the audience. Old Martin assumes some of the functions of the Chorus: he presents characters, indicates the place and time of the scenes, enhances internal conflicts among the characters, and evinces Pizarro's inner conflicts. He provides transition between the scenes, anticipating and announcing the entrance of characters (46). Martin also describes complex scenes, enhancing their emotional force, conveying important information, providing details, and explaining Indian and Spanish costumes. Old Martin's function as a kind of Chorus is corroborated by the sound effects, the background music, and all the musical instruments used to convey emotion and to give the impression of a society.[86] Also the choreography made by the soldiers who walk in the mountain, or fight with the Indians, or the procession of Indians carrying golden objects affect the audience, suggesting cadence and physical movement, a modern substitute for the dance of the Chorus.

Tension is a very important element present in the play. It reinforces the effect of fear, deepens the atmosphere of menace that surrounds all the story, and solidifies the structure of the play. The main conflict is very complex and it can be identified in Pizarro's choice, his dilemma—either to keep his word and save Atahuallpa, or save his men—and in the fascination he feels for Atahuallpa's immortality, his fear of losing his last chance of overcoming Time and Death. So there is an external as well as an internal, psychological conflict. If Pizarro keeps his word and saves Atahuallpa, he loses the chance of witnessing his supposed immortality and acquiring faith; if he surrenders to his men's wishes, he attains both objectives: nobody may accuse him of disloyalty to his men and he may witness a miracle which would bring a meaning

[86] "The playing of music contributes to the atmosphere desired, as in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and **Yonadab**. Shaffer also associates particular types of music with characters to denote their social tastes" (Gianakaris **Peter Shaffer** 50).

to his life. So, in a way, his final decision seems quite reasonable and pragmatic; he had little to lose and much to gain with it, the other option would bring him nothing except Atahuallpa's friendship and a dignity he despised. This conflict is also moral and ethical, on the one hand, and metaphysical, on the other hand, involving the essence of the mystery of life. Although Pizarro rejects any code of chivalry, the obedience to any rule or order, being his own commander, he gets involved with Atahuallpa and resists giving him to the nobles of Spain in order to be killed. Pizarro wants to do the right thing and to remain faithful to himself. Behind this personal conflict, the play shows the conflict of two different empires, two different social orders, two different cultures.

Another kind of tension results from the conflict between the Spanish soldiers inside and the Indians outside, and around the expedition. Old Martin describes the reaction of the soldiers moments before their meeting the Indians, while the actors move on the stage accordingly, "All heads turn" and "All stand" and "All remain absolutely still" (33). The spectators are told that they remained for more than ten hours immovable. Silence and motionlessness reinforce tension, announcing that something terrible is going to happen. The tension increases with Pizarro's anxious whispers—"Send him, send him" (34). This moment of great tension is extended by the Indians' strange attitudes and gestures, like sweeping the road for the arrival of Atahuallpa, which provoke great perplexity in the Spanish men. Afterwards, the Indians lay down their weapons, and their appearance is altered by the color of the sun, all "glittering red!" (35).

The play presents several themes, but the central one can be said to be the quest for eternal life and the overcoming of death. Pizarro's basic concern is existential. His great torment is the lack of sense in human life, and the oppressive, destructive power of Death and Time. This is made clear in one of his longest speeches in the play, lamenting the oppressive work of Time and Death against youth and life. The cycles of nature speak of death for Pizarro—"Round and round is all I see: an endless sky of birds, flying and ripping and nursing their young to fly and rip and nurse their young—*for what*? Listen, boy. That prison the Priest calls Sin Original, I know as Time" (63). The political issue is also addressed, the violence of the colonization process, the use of religion to justify aggression.[87] The play also analyzes the experience of

[87] Shaffer's plays reflect very well the modern world, with its violence, social injustice and corruption. He portrays a world that Steiner has commented on: "The political inhumanity of our time, moreover, has demeaned and brutalized language beyond any precedent. Words have been used to justify political falsehood, massive distortions of history, and the bestialities of the totalitarian state" (Steiner 315).

meeting the other, the question of otherness, prejudice, false judgements, communication, and transcultural relations. The play suggests the risks of cultural blindness and self-centeredness.

Shaffer comments on his play and suggests that envy is one of its themes, as well as "man's proper objection to divine arbitrariness" ("An Introduction to Three Plays" vii). The theme of "the loss of faith and the search for meaning in life" is the most evident in the play, as well as the corrupting influence of a distorted Christianity which hides oppression and justifies dominion and greed. Pizarro criticizes religion constantly and confesses his incapacity for faith, although his attitude and reaction confirm his fundamental necessity of finding a god, his religious need: "And what are your Christians? Unhappy hating men.... If I go marketing for Gods, who do I buy? The God of Europe with all its death and brooding, or Atahuallpa of Peru? His spirit keeps an Empire sweet and still as corn in the field" (70-1). The play presents a clash of cultures, of societies, of religions. According to Pizarro's commentary, the Christian God becomes another good of consumerism, an article to buy and possess.[88]

The visual effects were most celebrated in the play's first production, by Michael Annals, in 1964. Shaffer showed how all the dimensions of the stage could be explored. Spectators gazed at the richness of details and the impressive display of colors, yet the visual effects can vary according to the production, and a bare stage with an upper level can be enough (Shaffer Author's Notes xii).

The scenery of the play demands attention and the author's notes suggest its detailed plan. The stage is divided into two levels, prepared for the acting of concomitant scenes, allowing for the presentation of two different places or two different kingdoms. In a certain moment, while there is a conversation on the first level, Atahuallpa speaks on the second level (19). This resource indicates the stylized, non-realistic character of the play. The symbol of the golden sun is placed on the back wall of the stage, but at the beginning of the play it has the form of a "metal medallion, quartered by four black crucifixes, sharpened to resemble swords," thus suggesting the violent use of religion, or pointing to the proximity of crosses and swords (19). The giant circle of aluminium in the center, hung in a wooden back-wall, has twelve petals around it, the symbol of the Conquistadors when closed, a golden sun when opened (emblem of the Incas): "The center of this sun formed an acting area above the stage, which was used in Act I to show Atahuallpa in majesty, and in Act II served for his prison and subsequently for the treasure chamber" (xii). This

[88] Pizarro seems also to suggest an idealized view of the Indians, far from reality, but maybe connected with Prestcott's view.

contributes to the scenic, aesthetic, and symbolic effect of the play, as well as to create the atmosphere of mystery and exoticism.

Entrances and exits make part of the scenic aspect and are included in the vision of the play as a complete spectacle. Old Martin, the narrator, enters the stage walking calmly as a "Spanish hidalgo" (1). Young Martin enters the stage impetuously as a dreamy boy "duelling an invisible opponent with a stick" (1). The same character (two actors) living different moments enters the stage differently, one is disillusioned with life and duty, the other is full of dreams and chivalric ideals. The entrance and exit of Villac Umu, Chief Priest of Atahuallpa, together with his court, all wearing white clothes, provides a remarkable specatcle. And in scene 12 the Indians enter spectacularly, with many colors and vivacity, with the music resounding intensely, the King's attendants bringing musical instruments, "reed pipes, cymbals, and giant marraccas" (36).

In **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, gesture is not a mere detail, but an aesthetic affirmation, something also true in relation to **Equus** and **Amadeus**. These plays have something in common, "a certain flamboyance: a reliance upon gesture to enshrine idea—without which there is no theatre; a desire to enthral a crowd of watchers—without which there is certainly no theatre; and a strong pleasure in illusion" (Shaffer "An Introduction to the Three Plays" iv).

Miming is used when Old Martin describes the climbing of the Andes, and "[t]he men freeze and hang their heads for a long moment, before resuming their desperate climb" (26). Their climbing is stylized, not realistic, creating an atmosphere of nightmare, great effort and mystery. In the same scene, they resume their climbing until the Indians cry off stage, in echo: "Stand!" (26). The stage direction indicates that the "Spaniars whirl round" in response to the voice (26). Old Martin describes the reaction of the soldiers moments before their meeting the Indians. As he describes and narrates, the actors move on the stage accordingly: "All heads turn" and "All stand" and "All remain absolutely still" (33). Although there is no Chorus, Martin provides the commentaries and the group of actors provides the movement in block, the choreography.

Another significant gesture is made by Atahuallpa, to whom a Bible is given. He holds it to his ear and shakes it, smells it, licks it, throws it down—"No word" (37). The scene evinces the cultural differences betwen the two peoples, whereas for the priests, it means blasphemy. When Atahuallpa's crown is taken by Salinas and given to Pizarro, "who catches it and to a great shout crowns himself" (38), the Indians cry in horror. Cultural differences are again made

evident, and the Indians are scandalized. "The drum hammers on relentlessly while Atahuallpa is led off at sword-point by the whole band of Spaniards" (38).

An important and ambiguous gesture of friendship is seen when Pizarro "binds Atahuallpa's arm to his own with a long cord of rope last used to tie some gold" (72), protecting his life, evincing his identification with the king,[89] and suggesting fidelity, showing that individuality is above social interests and political priorities. Pizarro ties himself to Atahuallpa, saying: "Now no one will kill you unless they kill me first" (72). And after the ritual of purification in which Atahuallpa blesses Pizarro and Pizarro blesses Atahuallpa, the Inca cuts the rope with a knife (76).

It is important to note the use of masks in the play, because of its link with the Greek plays and because of the historical accounts that comment on the Indian masks:[90] Atahuallpa appears wearing a mask, crowned, dressed in gold (11). The Indian priests appear "clothed entirely in white fur. The High Priest wears a snow-white llama head on top of his own" (26). The other Indians wear "costumes of orange and yellow," decorated "head-dresses of gold and feathers" (36). Atahuallpa wears white, a mask of jade mosaic across his eyes and a circlet of gold around his head.[91] In the scene of the excitement about the gold and the confusion it triggers, the soldiers' appearance conveys the vision of something grotesque: "The soldiers, now dirty almost beyong recognition, but wearing ornaments, ear-rings and headdresses stolen from the treasure, dice for gold" (66). The ornaments which look grand in the Indians become grotesque on the soldiers. The Europeans can only imitate, and badly, what belongs to the Indian life.

Light and sound effects are used always in conjunction, and are fundamental in the play, providing for the atmosphere, intensifying fear, conveying the beauty of the land, suggesting intimacy, despair, day and night. The play starts with darkness, conveying the sobriety of Old Martin's first words (1). When Martin is left alone, the stage darkens again and the medallion on the back wall glows (11), together with the cries of "Inca!". The sound of exotic music mixes with chanting. The stage is altered, the medallion opens, showing Atahuallpa in the center,

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[89] "Pizarro is a different man in act 2 after Atahuallpa becomes his fountain of new life, at least temporarily; his nihilistic attitudes and chronic pessimism diminish when he is with the Son of the Sun. There is a strong identification between the two men: both are illegitimate and both are the leaders of men. Of even greater importance is that each one considers the other a god" (Klein **Peter Shaffer** 76-7).

[90] Prescott comments on the Indian soldiers wearing masks in his note 22.

[91] The white color, according to Juan-Eduardo Cirlot's **Dicionário de Símbolos**, is traditionally related to gold and to divinity, to the celestial state, even in the Christian culture (124-5).

masked, crowned, dressed in gold.[92] Shaffer uses light as to focus on Atahuallpa (15), a way of directing the attention of the audience. Technology helps modern theatre with elements that otherwise should have been in the spoken text, or would have demanded a change of scenery. In fact, the spotlight provides an alternative way of indicating a change of place without changing the scenery and using a curtain.

In the scene of the Massacre of the Indians, light is very well used in conjunction with physical movements and sound effects in order to convey terror (38). Although there is violence on the stage, it is stylized, not realistic. In the next Act, lights are fading above and brightening below: "Slowly the great cloth of blood is dragged off by two Indians as Atahuallpa appears" (46).

After analysing the theatrical devices used, let us study the play according to the categories defined by Aristotle in the **Poetics.** Shaffer's play presents a historical incident, under the perspective of a plain man, Martin. The author plays with the notion of *mimesis*, mixing historical and geographical information with fiction, with artistic purposes. Shaffer did a long historical research in order to write his play, referring to precise data—from June 1529 to August 1533—, and to precise places. He respects the historical names of those involved in the story, the famous Francisco Pizarro, the legendary Atahuallpa, as well as the members of the Spanish and Inca courts. He also resorts to some mythological elements of the European Christian continent and of South American culture; religious rituals and beliefs, divinities and the hope in the coming of the Messiah, the Savior. All these historical and cultural elements are mixed with the artificiality of theatre and with fiction. The playwright creates metaphysical and psychological tensions which add verisimilitude and possible explanations for the historians' plain account of events. He interweaves the fictional and the historical elements in such a degree of perfection that the limits between one and the other become blurred.[93] In fact, the historical data, although limiting some aspects of the drama, enhance the sense of truthfulness, and help the author to convince the audience and reach the emotional effect he desired.

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[92] The divine character of the Inca leader is emphasized by Prescott. "The government of Peru was a despotism, mild in its character, but in its form a pure and unmitigated despotism. The sovereign was placed at an immeasurable distance above his subjects. Even the proudest of the Inca nobility, claiming a descent from the same divine origine as himself, could not venture into the royal presence, unless barefoot, and bearing a light burden on his shoulders in token of homage" (46).

[93] As Martin Esslin comments, "the theatre, which merely adds another dimension of illusion to the fabric of illusion we call reality, is a perfect image of our situation as human beings in this world" (**Anatomy** 94).

The Francisco Pizarro created by Shaffer is afflicted by metaphysical preoccupations since his childhood, a frustrated man concerned with the final meaning of life and afraid of its emptiness, a child concerned with finding a wonderful place "where the people never died. Never grew old, or felt pain, and never died" (32). The point here is not so much the fear of death but the absence of meaning for life. Thus the play is true in the presentation of universal, human peoccupations and values, the concern with the evanescent force of life and the unbreakable power of Time. The conflicts of the characters, their search for meaning in life and for power are recognizable by the audience as real. Pizarro's moral dilemma is shared by all human beings, in different contexts and intensity, obviously. Thus, we see that *mimesis* goes beyond biography or history. Shaffer does not simply copy the historical battle of the Spanish and the Incas, or the historical portrait of Francisco Pizarro and Atahuallpa. He recreates the main characters and alters the focus of the conflict according to his personal and aesthetic view, and with an audience in mind. Therefore his play is interesting not only for those interested in history, but also for those interested in philosophy, in human conflicts, in psychological matters, in religious conflicts, and in modern problems.

Although the play refers to the official history of Peru, precisely the traditional perspective of Prescott, the focus is not the political issue but the existential quest for the meaning of life. In fact, the play inverts the historical conquest of the Indians by the Christian Europeans: Atahuallpa converts Pizarro and conquers him, his heart at least, and makes all Spaniards morally responsible for the massacre of the Inca nation. Although Eurocentric history says that the Indians were inferior and finally destroyed and dominated by the Europeans, the play shows the Spanish as socially and morally inferior, as they are moved by ambition and envy.

Shaffer's play reveals a strong sense of unity. All the scenes are centered on the figure of Pizarro and his complex relationship with Atahuallpa. Their meeting is a turning point. The first Act moves towards it, and the second Act develops its consequences and implications: someone must die, either the Spanish soldiers or the Indians. All the action of the play is arranged in order to enhance the clash between two different empires, two different leaders, two different religions, two different attitudes towards life. Each dialogue, each meeting, each scene has a purpose, even each character, each member of the group of soldiers.

Besides displaying unity, the action of the play is complex, presenting peripety and recognition. At the beginning Pizarro is a skeptical man, but after his personal contact with Atahuallpa, he loses his certainties and suspects that Atahuallpa could be right, that the Indian

could overcome the power of death, and Time. After Atahuallpa's death, Pizarro experiences deep suffering, recognizing the depth of his disillusion and acknowledging his own condition as a mortal being. The ethical conflicts he experiences are at the center of the play. From another perspective, that of the action itself, there is also peripety. What seemed impossible actually happened: 167 men subdued an empire of 24 million. The fall of the of the Incas' Empire seems to reflect Pizarro's inner fall. Most of the action of the play, in Aristotelian terms, is presented on the stage, through the interaction of the actors, although the narrator, Old Martin, appears constantly, giving new information and historical details of the story.

Pizarro, the hero of the play, is presented as a very human figure. A man of great experience and bitterness, he undergoes many internal conflicts. His bitterness is enhanced by Young Martin's idealism and optimism. His humanity contrasts with Atahuallpa's divine presumption, his sense of absoluteness and self-assurance. Pizarro's trauma with time is also contrasted with Atahuallpa's sense of immortality. Pizarro's humanity is also represented by his humble origin; he was the child of a poor family, as he himself describes: "I was suckled by a sow" (2). He feels frustrated in relation to life and needs prestige, self-affirmation and recognition. Pizzaro's pessimism, on the verge of nihilism, can be illustrated by his own words: "Fame is long. Death is longer" (30).[94] Apparently he seems to be the denial of the hero, since he lacks a reason either to live or to die. He is the representation of the modern hero.

Nevertheless, this conqueror has metaphysical concerns: life and death, eternity and time.[95] In fact, Pizarro is portrayed as a man in crisis, and this crisis is represented even by his physical defect, a wound that makes him walk with difficulty and attacks him with deep pain. The hero's critical unbalance is confirmed by his constant changes of mood, from harshness to melancholy, from orders of command to hesitation and despair. However, in spite of his humble origin and frustration, Pizarro has heroic qualities. He is a leader, called General by his men, the commander of the expedition who plays god before the Indians, assuming a superior position over Atahuallpa. He is a self-made man, an individual who overcomes all difficulties, a soldier of great courage and dare, capable of risking his own security in an adventure, of assuming the

[94] Shaffer comments on Pizarro's tragic condition, saying that it is not totally negative, nihilistic: "He [Pizarro] is left with no answers, ultimately with no existence. But in no very paradoxical sense he recovers joy, by finding real grief. The frost melts. As Genet said 'To see the soul of a man is to be blinded by the sun'" (Shaffer *apud* Cooke and Page 25).

[95] "The subject of death versus immortality dominates the play. Death, the eternal enigma, often drives Shaffer's protagonists to search for a beneficent deity tending the universe. But, to make Pizarro function dramatically as a prototypical hunter of God, Shaffer radically alters the facts. Early in the play, Pizarro appears alert and reflective despite a brutish exterior" (Gianakaris 80).

command of the group at a critical moment and resisting the pressures of the Spanish nobles. He is independent and free; he does not worship the Pope or the King of Spain. As the hero of the story, he calls the attention of the audience and is the target of intense admiration, conveyed mostly by Young Martin. He is heroic in his serious attitude towards life, in his search for meaning, more than for gold or glory, in his fantastic urge to overcome Time and death. However, as the play moves on, Pizarro reveals his profound human nature, his weakness, his doubts, and even the evanescence of his disbelief, his supreme necessity of hoping and his wish of salvation. His human virtues are revealed in his identification with Atahuallpa, in his sympathy for the Inca, in his generosity and openness towards the other, in his respect for the Indian power and culture, and even in his final "conversion" to the Indian's faith and god, the Sun. He also represents the human mortal will that faces destiny and is destroyed by it, leaving no definite answer, only a song of resignation and melancholy, a nostalgic consolation.

Pizarro's *hybris* is related to his wish of fame and historical or social recognition, not merely greed. He wants to move upward, in the direction of God. His Biblical pride becomes evident when he is climbing up the mountains. His attitude, when scaling the Andes, is like that of the proud man climbing up the skies to throw God out of His throne, in the narrative of the Babel Tower—"Show me the toppest peak-top you can pile—show me the lid of the world—I'll stand tiptoe on it and pull you right out of the sky" (25). Pizarro rules over the priests in his group, saying to them: "Bless them, Church!" (25). In spite of his frustrations and humble origin, he reveals his pride in relation to the challenges of the expedition to the New World. When he is going to meet the Indians and their king, he introduces himself as a god. He plays god, and this could be taken as an example of Biblical pride. However, he is conscious of his own humility, and his enactment of god is only a strategy to convince the Indians and get access to King Atahuallpa.

In fact Pizarro's expedition was a success, and his world was not haunted by the Furies. His *hybris*, however, brought him personal destruction, the annihilation of his last possibility of hope and faith in the human victory over Time. He was destroyed inside: "I lived between two hates: I die between two darks: blind eyes and a blind sky.... There's a snow of death falling all round us. You can almost see it. It's over, lad, I'm coming after you" (78-9). Because of his *hybris*, Pizarro gave his word, promising something he could not fulfill, Atahuallpa's freedom and trying to overcome something beyond his power: the destructive and invincible power of Time and Death. His excess has to do with the overestimation of his own capacity and with his

deep wish of immortality, his pride and presumption over life and death. In fact, the liberation of Atahuallpa would not solve his existencial problems, since they transcended the limited circumstance involving Atahuallpa's liberation. But the situation provided an opportunity for the manifestation of his *hybris*, peripety and recognition.

Pizarro's *hamartia* is related to his inability to maintain his word to Atahuallpa. He fails because he promised something impossible, something that did not depend only on him but on many other factors. He risked too much: he risked the lives of his men, when he played god to the Indians. In giving his word as leader and General, he displayed imprudence, but once having given it, he ought to have kept it. He put himself in an ethical dilemma too: to keep his word and save Atahuallpa's life or forget his promise, killing Atahuallpa and saving his men. He was divided between two duties: keeping a promise made to Atahuallpa or taking over the responsibility for the lives of his soldiers. Whatever the choice, the result would be fatal.

Pizarro's *hamartia* has several stages: his first mistake was to present himself as god to the Indians, then to allow the massacre of 3.000 Indians, then to promise Atahuallpa freedom in a bargain for gold, then believing almost naïvely, or at least wanting to believe, in Atahuallpa's divinity, and finally breaking his promise to Atahuallpa. His *hamartia* cannot be attributed to ignorance; since the beginning of the play he shows clear consciousness of the risks of the expedition, the kind of challenge they will face, the kind of society they will meet. Maybe he acted impulsively, improvising a solution for the extremely dangerous situation they were in, surrounded by the Indians; however, his orders to the soldiers suggest that he had control of the situation. What he did not expect was to be so fascinated by the personality of Atahuallpa, to the point of total transformation. The more he related with Atahuallpa the weaker he felt to handle the situation. He was blinded by his desire to know the meaning of life, and he sold everything for it, even his consistency, his leadership, and the safety of the group. Blinded by his selfish concern with his own eternal destiny, his metaphysical dilemma, Pizarro moved away from reality into a mad day-dream. In fact, when the nobles came to kill Atahuallpa, Pizarro tried to defend him, taking his sword. But he was alone. At this point Atahuallpa convinces him of his divinity. The situation is now out of his control.

Pizarro's ultimate change of fortune, his peripety, coincides with the death of Atahuallpa, garrotted by the Spaniards (77). He was seduced by Atahuallpa and started losing control of the situation; his soldiers rebelled against their General and the nobles took hold of the situation.

Atahuallpa was judged and killed; Pizarro cried and sang in despair. Old Martin links the fall of the hero to the fall of the Inca empire and to the moral fall of Spain:

> So fell Peru. We gave her greed, hunger and the Cross: three gifts for the civilized life. The family groups that sang on the terraces are gone. In their place slaves shuffle underground and they don't sing there... So fell Spain, gorged with gold; distended; now dying.... And so fell you, General, my master, whom men called the Son of His Own Deeds. He was killed later in a quarrel with his partner who brought up the reinforcements... (79)

Pizarro ends like a mad man, perplexed, and singing an Indian song. Martin is also affected by the terrible change of situation.

The element of *anagnorisis* is not clearly identifiable in the play, for all the characters are quite human, quite limited in vision and understanding is so difficult. It is only through suffering, faith, and disillusion that Pizarro and Martin experience some sort of insight into the human dilemma. Atahuallpa does not recognize his real situation and therefore he does not experience recognition. Pizarro had all the movements of the expedition very well planned, but he did not know how deeply he would be affected by the character of Atahuallpa. It is when Pizarro understands that the end of Atahuallpa is sealed and the King of the Incas is doomed that he reaches *anagnorisis*. When Atahuallpa is judged and executed, his body is thrown at Pizarro's feet, who contemplate it in silence and despair and cries (78). Atahuallpa does not overcome death and Pizarro feels totally cheated by him, trapped, and without freedom or hope.[96] In his fierce pain, Pizarro cries: "You have no peace for me, Atahuallpa" (78). He becomes conscious that Atahuallpa's doom foreshadows his own death.

A scene of intense display of suffering, i. e., a scene of *pathos*, follows the climax of the play—Pizarro's surrender to Atahuallpa's ritual of confession—and can be identified in the death of Atahuallpa, the crude moment of his death on the stage, innocent, without a chance of defense, his feet tied to a stake, a string slipped over his head, screaming and struggling with his body (77). The scene is shocking by its violence, enhanced by the visual and aural effects. The suffering of Atahuallpa represents the suffering of his people, the decadence of Spain, the death

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[96] This seems to confirm the analogies of the net, that is, there is in tragedies an intense "sense of an inexorable external pressure; the progressive constriction of the individual's power of choice" (Henn 40). Tragedy is then seen as a trap for the individual. "The thrust into the trap is... the responsibility of the individual fish. So it is, perhaps, in the tragedy born of self-will, or of the sexual instinct, or of the will to power" (Henn 41).

of Pizarro, and Young Martin's moral ruin (77-9). This is the moment of most intense emotion in the play.

Pity and fear are abundantly triggered by the play, related to the moments of tension and suffering that suggest that Pizarro's and Atahuallpa's dramatic situation is shared by all the human race. The sense of pity is enhanced by the constant interventions of Old Martin, who conveys the depth and the suffering of the Indians under the violence of the Spanish soldiers, as well as by the stylized choreography, as in the scene of the massacre of the Indians (38), or the scene of Atahuallpa's death (77), followed by Pizarro's great commotion. These are the most important scenes, but there are other details that arouse pity, like Pizarro's physical suffering and doubts. In those moments his humanity is made more evident. Atahuallpa's suffering is more intense because it is undeserved, unjust, violent, and cruel.

Fear is provoked by the scenes of tension, in which the soldiers are surrounded by the Indians in the forest (12-3), or when Pizarro expresses all his anguish about the meaning of life, the pressure of Time and the menace of death, such an anguish being shared by all humankind. The corrosive power of Time and gold is an important source of fear in the audience, used to and affected by the same forces. When Pizarro gives his word, promising to save Atahuallpa, and soon feels unable to fulfill it, the audience identifies with his dilemma, and fears at the possibility of commiting the same mistake, of facing the same limitations. Thus fear is triggered whenever the play evinces human vulnerability, and the audience infers that they run similar risks.

Catharsis is present in the play, linked with the scenes of suffering and recognition or understanding. The scenes of suffering are pregnant of emotion and claim for meaning, for intellectual elaboration. There are many rituals in the play, Christian and Incaic: masses, sacrifices, prayers.[97] There is a scene in which Pizarro is purified by Atahuallpa, showing the European being redeemed by the Indian, the atheist being saved by the pagan. Religious language pervades all the scenes of the play, which seems to allude to the religious meaning of the word *catharsis*, the purification of negative emotion.[98]

Both Atahuallpa and Pizarro suffer, in the place of the audience, and their intense and undeserved suffering works as a liberating force for the audience, which suffers vicariously. After

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[97] Shaffer "has most overtly followed Artaud in shaping drama as ritualistic enactment" (Gianakaris 85).

[98] Martin Esslin alludes to the religious aspect of *catharsis* when he says: "The experience of sharing another human being's fate with deep compassion, of having gained a profound, lasting insight into human nature and man's predicament in this world produces an emotion akin to a religious feeling; and this feeling of having been touched by something beyond and outside our mundane everyday experience, having gained an insight into the workings of destiny, produces the sublime, cathartic effect of tragedy" (**Anatomy** 74).

the scenes of bloodshed and violence against the Indian and after the judgement of the innocent King of the Incas, the contemporary audience, so charged with and haunted by the guilt and violence of a century of wars, experiences for a moment a kind of relief by the contemplation of an innocent dying in the hands of cruel civilized men, and dying with dignity and hope. Besides all the emotional elements of the scene, there is a moral lesson to be learnt, something to be understood, a metaphysical apprehension of the dignity of the human being: the individual can face the injustice and violence of certain situations without losing his faith, like Atahuallpa; and even when losing his faith the individual can find some consolation in friendship and communion, in the sharing of the same human condition.

The play evinces the unreliability of human projects, how men face their limitations and how their comprehension is distorted by immediate shadows and blindness. Yet it also conveys the greatness of the human being when facing what is bigger and more powerful than himself. It also conveys the idea that friendship is possible between human beings, as well as identification between men of different cultures. Although all the religious, idealistic, and chivalrous values are denied, the freedom of the individual is affirmed, and the solidarity between human beings is reinforced. The play ends with a sad song that conveys some sort of consolation, that is, even after the great tragedy of life, even after the great fall of the hero, after catastrophe: "To sit in a great cold silence, and sing out sweet with just our own warm breath: that's some marvel, surely" (78). Even when life is unfair, the individual can sing a song.

[B] **Equus**

Darkness and silence. The spotlight slowly focuses on a boy called Alan, who is fondling a horse, while a psychiatrist called Dysart,[99] who is smoking, comes and comments on the uniqueness of the case. This first scene defines and exemplifies the rest of the play, presenting Alan's special relationship with horses, the doctor's perplexity and fascination for the boy's capacity for passion, the atmosphere of religious ecstasy and mental perturbation. It also establishes the scheme of probability. Alan is a schizophrenic boy who has blinded six horses in a stable; Dysart is a man in conflict, the psychiatrist who tries to understand the boy's problem and is himself in the dilemma of curing or not the boy. Dysart is, in fact, the narrator of the play,

[99] "Dysart's name (with its connotations of dysfunction, dies, as well as Dis the Roman god of the underworld) implies that his rationalism is the death-principle" (Innes 410).

constantly addressing the audience and investigating the origin of Alan's fascination with horses, and introducing the scenes that are presented in flashback. The play focuses on Alan's psychological conflicts: a childhood marked by his father's repression and his mother's religion; a teenage marked by emptiness in a world marked by capitalism; a mind saturated with jingles, facilities, television commercials, and sexual blockage. All this is compensated by his adoration of Equus, a personal myth, a self-made god in the form of a horse. But the play also evinces the doctor's crisis, his personal moral dilemma of adjusting the boy to a world that has no meaning, besides the emptiness of his own family life, the sterility and coldness of his relation with his wife, and his professional frustration.[100]

Using the categories of Aristotle, we can observe the formal richness of the play in terms of tragedy, as well as its creative deviation from the Aristotelian model. The playwright selected some classical conventions, like the Chorus, the physical maneuver on stage, the use of masks, and altered others, like the notion of hero and *mimesis*.

The playwright created his fictional work using some real incidents to which he added a lot of recreation. The original idea of the play was inspired by a conversation Shaffer had with a friend who told him the vague story of a boy who had blinded six horses (Note on the Play **Equus** 9). In fact, the crime was committed several years before the playwright started writing it. Shaffer had only a vague idea of the original facts, and his friend died a few months later, so that he "could not verify what he had said, or ask him to expand it. He had given me no name, no place, and no time.... I had to create a mental world in which the deed could be made comprehensible" (9). Based on that obscure information, the author recreated, with great freedom of expression and personal initiative, a play in which the schizophrenia of the modern world is exposed, as well as the frustrations of the individuals in the present society, the alienation of the self, the fear of the unknown, and the sense of sacredness in a secular era.

In spite of his freedom of imagination, Peter Shaffer worked with the help of a "distinguished child psychiatrist" who advised him and commented on the play, making it more consistent with the real world of psychiatry and therefore more convincing (9). In addition, many real places and entities are alluded to in the play, contributing to enhance the mimetic force of the play as a recreation of reality. Besides, the situation presented in the play is very real: the human drama, the pressure on the boy, the crisis of the doctor, and the decadence of family relations.

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[100] "Dysart is suffering from a malaise both personal and professional, one which he prefers to call 'professional menopause'. The problem is that Dysart has lost faith in what he is doing..." (Klein 102).

However, in his introductory notes, Shaffer instructs the actors to preserve some sort of stylized enactment, specifically speaking of the horses:

> Any literalism which could suggest the cozy familiarity of a domestic animal—or worse, a pantomime horse—should be avoided. The actors should never crouch on all fours, or even bend forward. They must always—except on the one occasion where Nugget is ridden—stand upright, as if the body of the horse extended invisibly behind them. Animal effect must be created entirely mimetically, through the use of legs, knees, neck, face, and the turn of the head which can move the mask above it through all the gestures of equine wariness and pride. (The Horses 15)

Thus *Mimesis* should be not literal but suggestive, not at the surface level but in attitude. Most of the action of the play is stylized, but dialogues are very naturalistic, offering very real and plausible pieces of conversation, using colloquial language, and many realistic gestures.

Although the play is full of symbols, supernatural manifestations and psychological deformations, the scheme of probability guarantees that the reality of the facts and the law of cause and consequence are respected. Thus, a crime is still a crime, Alan's attitudes have real consequences, and the conflicts in the family and their implications are serious. There is a real world being portrayed on stage, although this realism is broken several times, as when the dialogues are interrupted and blended with a collage of flashbacks. Reality is reshaped by memory and imagination. Then, the delicate expedition into the imaginary world of Alan with its myths, and into his new, personal, sensuous and equinous religion makes Dysart think of his own life, his personal struggles in family and profession and his bad dreams. The constant flashback scenes allow memory to invade and disrupt the present time and are dramatized with the same solidity and intensity of the physical movements, so that reality and dream converge and share the same space and time.

In the scene in which the girl brushes the horse called Nugget, the body of the horse is invisible, the head is transparent, but "she brushes the invisible body of Nugget, scraping the dirt and hair off on to the invisible curry-comb. Now and then the horse mask moves very slightly in pleasure" (57). The scene is quotidian, the movements are realistic, but the absence of the body denounces the peculiar notion of *mimesis*.

Following the Aristotelian notion of unity of action, all the particular actions of the play are centered on Alan's crime and Dysart's crisis. All the precedent scenes are directed toward the climax, the scene of the blinding of the horses, trying to explain the great amount of forces that culminate in Alan's *hamartia*. No scene is out of this center. When the play finishes, there is a

sense of fulfillment, the conviction that a superficial view of reality has been replaced by a deeper comprehension of existence.

Although there are elements of fantasy in the play, like the manifestations of mythical beings and supernatural phenomena, there is a strong restraint and respect for the laws of probability and necessity in the play. The supernatural experiences are clearly related to Alan's mental states, to his psychological anguish. At the end, it becomes clear for the audience that the frustrations of Alan's relation with his father, the several deceptions in family life, the transference of religious icons and values from Christianity to the new personal god Equus, his sexual blockage, and his rejection of society are reasonable causes for the crime committed and for the strange relation he developed with the horses. No serious law of logic is broken in the play, on the contrary, reason is confirmed, although the irrational is emphasized and the importance of the transcendental is celebrated in the play.

Following the Aristotelian categories, the action of the play can be classified as complex, involving the double movement of peripety and recognition. Alan falls from the heights of ecstatic religious experience undergone in his night rides and in his sensuous adoration of Nugget, to the torments of the terrible scene of the piercing of the horses' eyes, when he is so near to having a sexual relation with Jill. Communion is replaced with solitude, happiness with infelicity, love with hate, tenderness with violence, religious vision with blindness, the sweet horses' sweat with blood, and orgasm with guilt. At the same time, Alan experiences his agony twice, as he is involved in the treatment and forced to retell his past life to the doctor.

The Doctor, who is the real protagonist, also suffers, and his patient research into the suffering of the boy provides a deeper understanding of the boy's life and of his own condition as a priest of the modern society, someone paid to "kill" children. In contrast with the boy, who is passion and alienation, Dysart is all reason and consciousness, able to recognize the complex forces put into motion in the story of the boy and the moral implications of his own office.[101] In fact, the Doctor is in a crisis since the beginning of the play; he already knows his dilemma. But the constant interviews with the boy confirm his suspicions that his work is questionable, thus revealing his own inconsistencies and the frustrations reflected in his own dreams. Dysart undergoes the fall of his myths, the lack of passion. Perspectives of change are not positive for

[101] Complementing Boal's observation on the reppressive character of Greek tragedy as a form of preserving social order, Drakakis says that "tragedy, even at its beginnings in Western culture, served both to reinforce and to challenge the structural principles of its producing culture" (Drakakis Introduction **Tragedy** 16).

the boy; he would become only a dull reflection of what the doctor was. Dysart does not change his attitude toward life and work, he only sees things more clearly. But he acquires a growing feeling of sympathy for Alan, and at the end of the play he laments the condition of the boy, embraces him, and looks at him with love, identifying with him.

Alan is not morally superior to the rest of the race; however, he possesses an extraordinary intuition, and a unique spirituality materialized in an eccentric private religion. He is just a seventeen-year-old common boy who belongs to the middle class, without refinement, without education, apparently a normal boy. The crime he committed disqualified him morally to fit the status of a hero—blinding the horses, resisting authority, rejecting society and hating the real world. However, the boy has done something unique and, according to Dysart, has also a unique experience of life, intense desire, spontaneity, and faith. Doctor Dysart is also a common man, however haunted by a profound existential crisis. He criticizes society as it is organized and questions the notion of normality. He is not the figure of the hero who is above the audience in moral virtues and deeds. The play privileges the common man as the protagonist of the story. If there is a moral value through which the boy stands above the average of the members of society, it is his authenticity, the courage of affirming his own individuality and subjectivity without conforming to social rules. In fact, Dysart seems to evince the lack of authentic worship and passion in modern society. However, neither Dysart nor Alan can be seen as heroes in Aristotelian terms. They are much nearer Medea and her capacity for witchery and dissimulation.

Shaffer's play shows the decadence of a common and somber family, plunged into maladjustment, fanaticism, lack of dialogue, violence and tension. However, Alan is special within the limits of his own personal world; he is almost a myth himself, the priest of his own religion. In a very restricted and specific way, he is the creator, servant, and killer of a god, or the receptor of a new revelation. But it is necessary to recognize that this kingdom is too restricted, and his behavior pathological: he is just an unbalenced boy playing with myth, passion and faith. His character is the result of the fragility of his own mind, the pressures of the world in which he lives, and family relations, but it is also the consequence of a certain capacity for intuition, emotion, sensuality, and transcendence. His resistance to fake social values and concepts and his resistance to domination show certainly that he possesses some sort of moral sensibility. He represents the reaffirmation of subjectivity and individuality in a society deeply marked by the alienation and disintegration of the self. But from the viewpoint of rationality and normality he is just a freakish boy placing himself on an altar, revealing a deformity of perception. Indeed, Alan

cannot relate to anybody else, except Equus. He is totally isolated, and therefore he cannot represent society.

The notion of *hamartia* is quite evident in the play and is a key element, since it is linked to a crime and to the character of its perpetrator. The crime is shocking, the author is known, the legal consequences are clear, but the reasons for the crime are unknown. So Alan's *hamartia* cannot be simply reduced to the crime itself; it is more than a moral transgression. For sure, it has a deeper significance, something beyond the mere appearance of madness, which is the lack of any rationality. Alan intended in fact to blind the omniscient eyes of Equus; he wanted to make god blind and dead. It also has a psychological dimension, being the symptom of a tormented soul who has lost control over the instincts, revealing an ambiguous mind that wants to adore and kill the most supreme values of his soul.

Dysart's *hamartia* is more typical of tragedy, that is, altering the personality of the boy, killing his passion and adapting him to the conventional criteria of normality, which almost means mediocrity and apathy. Indeed, the play is not an apology of madness; the boy was extremely unhappy, and tragedy usually deals with extremes. Dysart's challenge was, in fact, to cure the boy without turning him into a puppet. But the psychiatrist himself sinks in a deep crisis. It seems to exemplify what Shaffer himself says: in tragedy, one has to choose between two rights—in this case, social versus private. Dysart is the real protagonit of the play, sharing in some measure Alan's *hybris* and *hamartia*, acting freely and consciously, which makes Shaffer's play problematic. Since the beginning Dysart knows what he has to do, but he feels sorry for doing it; he is reluctant about it. Dysart's *hybris* is, then, related to his lack of passion in life, his methodical, controlled, predictable and boring existence, while Alan's is related to his exalted passion, sexuality and imagination.

Alan's *hamartia*, the visible act of blinding the horses, suggests a mental and spiritual attitude. When he progressively elaborated an alternative religion and consecrated to it all his emotion and passion, when he moved beyond logic and reason and tried to dominate divinity, he played with very creative and destructive forces of life, therefore trespassing the *métron*. His *hybris* is related to his wish of dominating and being dominated by Equus, being filled by and getting rid of his god. Alan is a sort of king Oedipus who blinds the gods and not himself, who cannot stand the divine demands of total surrender. In fact, when he is near to blinding the horses, he carefully conceals his intention and, his pick behind his back, behind tender gestures and

sweet words says gently: "Equus...Noble Equus...Faithful and True...God-slave...Thou—God—Seest—NOTHING!" (105).

In his crisis, Dysart questions the discourse of science, seeing himself as a "priest" who does not believe in his god anymore, doubting the validity of rituals and institutions, and even the morality of his holy function as killer of children. His existential crisis is reflected in the mirror of the boy's crisis, as if they were the same dilemma: the refusal of adjustment to social structures and values, the need of an alternative experience with the world, a more sensitive, sensuous, and happier experience with life. Dysart envies the boy's deep and "real" ecstasy. Both characters' *hybris* has to do with their wish to control the absolute, overcome personal limitations, and develop a more intuitive experience with life. Both Alan and Dysart want to get rid of their gods, Alan by piercing the eyes of Equus, and Dysart by rejecting the priestly function of carving children.

The play as a whole depicts the process of discovery of the reasons for the crime, the implications of the cure, and the inner conflicts of the characters. Dysart narrates the main incidents and connects them, analyzing each relevant piece of information. Although he knows everything from the beginning and acts knowingly, during the flashback scenes the other characters enact their own moments of discovery, and Dysart also gives the impression of intense learning.

All the characters in the play have their secrets: Alan's secret failure with Jill, Dora's fear of sex and frustrated life, Frank's visits to the cinema in the evening, Dysart's dreams. Alan learns something about himself and changes too, as he conveys in his letter to Dysart: "I know why I'm here" (84). His painful experience of self-knowledge is conducted by Dysart, as if it were unavoidably plucked from his inner parts. In fact, differently from Oedipus, Alan tries to run away from any confession or recognition, but he cannot avoid Dysart's persistence and cheating. The act of narrating, although painful by itself, brings a certain relief, like in a confession; it leads to the recognition of the danger of living beyond the boundaries of sanity, society, and objectivity. However, this knowledge brings no redemption;[102] it does not edify. The psychiatrist also recognizes his personal mistakes: his marriage to the wrong woman, his choice

[102] Shaffer's tragedies seem to confirm Steiner's assumption that in tragedy there is no salvation, no real consolation, no excuse of ignorance, no material or secular remedies, no divine explanation, no happy ending. "In the norm of tragedy, there can be no compensation" (129).

of the wrong profession, the want of passion in his life, of happiness, of freedom, of authenticity, all lost for the sake of social recognition.

According to Aristotle, in complex plays recognition follows peripety, that is, the radical change in the hero's fortune. Alan's peripety—his nightmares and his nervous breakdowns at the hospital—precedes his recognition of his situation. He learns something about himself, although the knowledge neither redeems his life nor guarantees his happiness. It is a painful moment and a desperate end. However, his life was not happy before; it was a sequence of traumas and frustrations, in the family and at the shop. Alan's previous condition is seen as happy only by Dysart, and only at the night rides. Alan's peripety is very dubious; his antecedent fortune was a very sad one. And he was condemned to something worse: to wander without a destination in the "multi-lane highways driven through the guts of cities" (108). Seeing Alan's fall, Dysart undergoes an inner fall and recognizes it.

The play also offers an interesting correlative element of *nemesis*, corresponding to the visits of the *Erinyes*, divinities sent by Zeus in order to torment the individuals who transgress the law and commit *hamartia*. Alan and Dysart are both haunted by terrible nightmares (24, 26). In his dream, Dysart is "a chief priest in Homeric Greece. I'm wearing a wide gold mask, all noble and bearded, like the so-called Mask of Agamemnon found at Mycenae. I'm standing by a thick round stone and holding a sharp knife..." (24-5). He participates in a ritual of sacrifice of 500 children. Dysart with an amazing "surgical skill" cuts the children and "slice[s] elegantly down to the navel, just like a seamstress following a pattern" (24). The dream is full of violence and focuses on Dysart's reactions behind the mask; the vision of the boys being sacrificed makes him feel "nauseous," although he "redouble[s] [his] efforts to look professional" (25). But the mask begins to slip and the priests see "the green sweat running down" Dysart's face; they tear out the knife out of his hand and then he wakes up (25).

There are many scenes of suffering in the play: the Doctor's psychological agony, Alan's dreams and conflicts, agonies and pains, the humiliation of the father, the guilty preoccupation of the mother, the affliction of the owner of the horses. But the most evident and important scene of *pathos* is the one which shows the blinding of the horses. They are innocent victims of the boy's insanity; and their suffering, enhanced by visual and aural effects, coincides with the climax of the play, the highest moment of emotion.

Pity is also triggered by the psychological suffering of the boy, incrusted with mythological significance, thanks to Dysart's mediation. Dysart's attitude toward the boy moves

from complete indifference to growing solidarity, from professional neutrality to personal identification. The personal struggle of the Doctor is also pitiful. He is shown as an honest and sensitive man who can neither stand the superficiality of social life and its pressure over the individual, nor tolerate the lack of emotion, intuition, and passion in life. The audience identifies with the common man who tries to be honest with himself and recognizes the lack of meaning of social life. But the most intense experiences of pity are centered on Alan, who cannot cope with normality and creates a world for himself, a world in which Equus is the religious center, the sexual force, its meaning and purpose.

The pitiful elements in the play generate fear, the impression that the same bad fortune can happen to any other person in the audience, any other family. The audience can feel and fear the same destructive forces that operate in society and sense the same lack of meaning in life, the same want of passion, and the same unconscious pressures. Fear is present in the repressive figure of the father, in the Doctor's nightmares, in the boy's dreams and terrors, in Dalton's panic. The fearful emptiness of social life is made evident in the play, in the automatism of social behavior, in the mechanization of the individual, in his transformation into a trademark, a robot. The play evinces the fear of losing the meaning of life, the capacity for passion, the force of faith, and the condition of innocence.

Alan is full of fear, even his physical reactions point to it, his repressed attitude, his repetitive jingles, his resistance to and hesitation in answering Dysart's questions, and his collapse. And at the end of the play, in the scene in which he feels all his inner conflicts boiling inside, Alan's fear becomes intense, when he laments and fears to disobey his god and lose his blessing and his presence, fearing the omnipresent jealousy of Equus. He asks for forgiveness in silence and terror: "Friend...Equus the Kind...The Merciful!...Forgive me!..." (104), but the answer is only silence. Nugget, the horse who represents Equus, menacingly "begins to advance slowly, with relentless hooves, down the central tunnel" and exhorts him: "I see you. I see you. Always! Everywhere! Forever!" (105). The sound effect and the solemn physical movement of Equus suggest fear, surprising Alan at the precise moment of his sin, in which his devotion toward his god is rivaled by his attraction to Jill. Dysart recognizes that Alan is "full of misery and fear," that he knows "a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life. And let me tell you something: I envy it" (82).

Some of the cathartic moments of the play are connected to Alan's moments of ecstasy, like when he was riding Nugget at night, or when he rode a horse for the first time, on the beach,

both very sensuous moments. In these scenes, Alan is totally free and can transcend the limits of his life, enjoying a complete communion with the animal, symbol of the divine. *Catharsis* can also be connected to the emotion Alan feels, impressed by the vision of his father as just another mortal being, feeling disillusion like in the death of a hero. His disappointment with the figure of the father, until that moment a symbol of power and respect, has also a sexual implication, for Alan catches him watching a pornographic film.

The blinding of the horses represents the most intense moment in the play, the climax of Alan's conflict between total surrender to his god and his sexual arousal for Jill. The scene includes fear, despair, guilt, and liberation. Alan blinds the horses because he wants to resist the omnipresence of his god; it is an iconoclastic, liberating moment. In fact, his religion was a prison for him, the imaginative representation of a harmful sickness. His *hamartia*, then, is an act of self-affirmation. The miming provides a very therapeutic experience in which the boy suffers vicariously. At the end of the play, Alan is exhausted, having exposed the deep wounds of his heart. However, the force of Equus is not killed by the boy's attempt, or even by the Doctor's treatment.

At the end of the play, the audience feels a certain emotional relief, enlightened by the understanding of a mystery in human existence. This enlightenment seems to point to the idea of *catharsis* as an intellectual and moral experience: the acquisition of a better understanding of the human soul and of the forces of life and society. Society is sick, but the boy's "death" and the Doctor's priestly, anguished work provide a therapeutic understanding of the situation, giving meaning to a meaningless crime, a senseless tale, a tasteless existence, and unspeakable agony. At the end of the play, suffering is silently accepted as unavoidable, in a certain accommodation to social values and standards. Both Alan and Dysart resign themselves to the forces of normality. There is also a sense o forgiveness: all characters are just human beings in search of meaning for life—the unhappy bitter father, the alienated well-intentioned mother, the shy boy, the doctor in conflict, the girl wanting attention and a good time. They are all accused and pardoned by the bloody sacrifice of Equus. However, although Alan is changed and will change as an individual and Dysart is affected by the boy, society is not changed. Knowledge cannot save, although it helps to understand and cope with life, which does not mean less suffering but greater consciousness.

According to Shaffers' directions, the Chorus, composed by six horses that represent Equus, mainly Nugget, produce sound effects and sit around up-stage, "humming, thumping, and

stamping—though never of neighing or whinnying" (16). In fact, it is simply a sound effect, with no intelligible commentary on the scenes, enhancing the unutterable manifestation of Equus. The Narrator, who mediates the relation with the audience, introduces some characters, drives the emotional response of the audience, divides the scenes, structuring the play, and makes commentaries.

One of the serious structural problems of the play is related to the doubleness of the situation. The protagonist is the narrator, although Alan rivals him. In fact Dysart speaks 995 lines in the play, while Alan speaks only 647, and most of his speech is made of short answers replete of pauses and hesitations. Alan is indeed a very inarticulate character. It is the Doctor who drives the action of the play, the one who understands the tragic implications of Alan's *hamartia*. Alan is seen more as a victim of society than as an autonomous individual. He seems to be just a neurotic boy, although Dysart sees in him characteristics such as authenticity, passion, intuition, and sensuality. Dysart's vision, however, is obliterated by his own existential crisis, by his own inner conflicts.

Having analyzed the play according to the Aristotelian categories, I will observe now the theatrical devices used, starting with the element of language. The play presents colloquial language, some commercial jingles, and some quotations from the Bible. Jargon of psychiatry is also used. The language used, indeed, does not present creative word-play or poetic beauty; it is very common and helped by the physical movements and ritual. Yet, language is a fundamental element because of its contribution to enhance tension and develop the plot.[103]

The colloquial language creates the effect of realistic dialogues, although there are many dreamy moments, like when Alan recollects incidents of his childhood and teenage in which mythological terms are used like, "Ek" for Equus. Dysart uses many words and expressions related to horses, making clear his own inner conflicts, such as "All reined up," the "new track of being," "clean-hoofed", "horse-power" (18). In fact, Dysart assimilates Alan's words to give articulation to his own world, mingling with the jargon of psychiatry (19).

Alan also uses informal language, but sometimes he imitates the Biblical style, emphasizing the mythical nature and the importance of what is being said:

> And Prance begat Prankus! And Prankus begat Flankus!.... Flankus
> begat Spankus. And Spankus begat Spunkus the Great, who lived

[103] "Dramatists of our day use an apparent—in the best writers, only an apparent—informality of language, but any theatre-performance remains largely a rite, which we know is intended to be performed, has in most cases been performed, many times over" (Leech 58-9).

> three score years!.... And Legwus begat Neckwus. And Neckwus begat Fleckwus, the King of Spit. And Fleckwus out of his chinkle-chancle!.... And he said 'Behold—I give you Equus, my only begotten son!.... Ek... wus. (50-1)

Alan's religion has even a list of enemies, in Biblical style: "The Hosts of Hoover. The Hosts of Philco. The Hosts of Pifco. The House of Remington and all his tribe!" (73), all trade marks and products of consumption. Alan creates his own vocabulary of religious terms: "It's his place of Ha Ha" (70), the holy field of religious celebration and ecstasy. Alan creates an instrument of penitence called the "Manbit" (71), a stick for his mouth, a "Sacred stick. Keep it in the hole. The Ark of the Manbit" (71).

The extent of Alan's fascination with horses is partly conveyed through his fantastic dialogues. Dora, in fact, had introduced him to the experience of talking to animals: "He loved the idea of animals talking" (30). She had told him the story of the speaking horse called Prince, a story linked with pagan notions of the horse as a divine creature (31). It is Dora who alludes to the conquest of America and to the Christians being confounded with horses by the Indians: "the pagans thought horse and rider was one person" (31). This piece of dialogue introduces Alan to the idea of the mystical unity of man and horse, a religious theme: "Actually they thought it must be a god" (31).

The dialogues are charged with great emotional instability, stressed by the several pauses indicating hesitation. Sometimes realistic, often stylized, they are edited and linked with artistry. Thus while Dysart is talking to Dora, for example, Alan talks simultaneously to her, in a flashback scene. And while Dysart talks to Hesther about Alan's mother, the boy interrupts, standing up and defending her: "She knows more than you" (28).

Communication between Alan and Dysart is very difficult. In their first dialogue the boy refuses to cooperate. There are many pauses, until they find a compromise: both will answer and tell the truth (36). Basically, this dialogue follows the question-and-answer structure. Sometimes the boy waits even three days to answer a question. In scene 3 Dysart asks Alan "which parent is it who won't allow you to watch television? Mother or father? Or is it both?" (23). Only in scene 6 he suddenly jumps up and cries: "Dad!" (27). Dysart observes that it was the "answer to a question I'd asked him two days before. Spat out with the same anger as he sang the commercials" (27).

Dialogue also helps to develop the theme of the play, like in the rich conversation between Dysart and Hesther about the uselessness of curing the boy or being a psychiatrist.

Dysart and Hesther have different opinions about the boy. For Dysart, Alan is a victim and curing the boy is to kill the only meaning of his life; and for Hesther, Alan is dangerous and curing him is the only chance of relieving him of his suffering (81). For Dysart, Alan's madness is "[h]is pain. His own. He made it," it is a personal achievement, something unique, something important to him. Dysart makes an important pause and continues:

> Look... to go through life and call it yours—*your life*—you first have to get your own pain. Pain that's unique to you. You can't just dip into the common bin and say 'That's enough!'.... All right, he's sick. He's full of misery and fear. He was dangerous, and could be again, though I doubt it. But that boy has know a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life. And let me tell you something: I envy it. (82)

Dysart concludes: "I'm jealous, Hesther. Jealous of Alan Strang" (82). This dialogue then provides important information on Alan's conflicts, on Dysart's ambiguous relation to Alan, and even on Dysart's own *hybris* and *hamartia*. This dialogue is almost a confession, a recognition of a real loss inside him. Dysart knows the limits of psychology, the impossibility of reproducing happiness, the superficiality of the treatment, the mediocrity of normality, and the danger of repressing sexuality. Dysart's last words convey that he is totally identified with Alan: "There is now, in my mouth, this sharp chain. And it never comes out" (109).

The characters of the play can be divided between types and complex individuals, according to their development. Frank seems to fit the type of the old communist, and Dora is a typical religious person, a housewife, a teacher, a spoiling mother, protective and frustrated in her marriage. Dysart and Alan are more complex, for they show their weakness and their fragility, make moral decisions, have psychological depth, and are conscious of their own deeds and history; they change, at least in their learning with life.

The structure of **Equus** makes evident the main conflict of the play: Dysart's professional crisis, Alan's hesitation between his religious passion directed toward Equus, and his own sexual compulsion, his temptation of having an involvement with Jill. Dysart's conflict is related to Alan's and echoes it as a negative photograph. In a way, Alan's conflict illuminates and is illuminated by Dysart's suffering. The climax of the play is the scene of the blinding of the horses, in which the transcendent manifestation of a zealous god meets the convulsion of a tormented human soul in an explosion of rage and despair. Faith is seen as a conflict between two strong desires: to remain faithful to one's god and to accede to the experience of romantic, sensual love. For a moment, Alan believes that he can kill his omnipresent god, but soon he

becomes conscious that his god is the only source of his happiness. Indirectly, the play revolves round the anguish of Dysart's soul and the understanding of Alan's mind.

Although the play is divided into two acts and 35 scenes, there is no interruption between them; the action is continuous, although the scenes indicate a change of time or place or mood (12). Resorting to the same artifice used in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, the play is presented in flashback, and the point of attack is late. In fact, Dysart is in the present, trying to recover Alan's memories and his family's, trying to understand the boy's real problem. The structure of the play contains all the basic elements of theatrical convention: a Prologue, a Development, a Climax, and an Epilogue. The Prologue is presented by Dysart, already in the first scene, situating the audience in the universe of the play and presenting Alan's and Dysart's conflicts. Every minor conflict drives the attention and prepares for the main conflict; and the major conflict is made up of the several minor ones.

The play is centered on Dysart's narrative. He is always in control of the situation and guides Alan until his final confession and clarification, foreshadowing his future treatment and re-adjustment to the routine of society. Alan's agony is shown in the play, not only his passion and the suffering that it implies, but also the split of his self. The sexual and religious implications of his crime are made evident through the plot. Moved by his schizophrenia, Alan recreates a miniature of a religion, including a supernatural being, a ritual, an ecstatic experience, adoration, excitement, a sense of unity with the universe, an entirely new vocabulary, and a temple. Next, Dysart's anticipation of Alan's future is presented in the Reconciliation scene, showing how the psychiatric treatment will deform his personality, his authentic experience of faith and passion. The Epilogue includes Dysart's last and melancholic words, his lament over the boy's suffering as a victim of society, and his own confession of being under the torment of the same god Equus, and his recognition of the essential and harmful character of his profession (108). Now Dysart's identification with Alan is total: he incorporates the agony of the boy, translates his own psychological pressures into religious terms—the menacing presence of a haunting god. Like Alan, who resists Equus and blinds horses, Dysart resists Equus and blinds children. Both experience the darkest moments of their lives.

Some members of the audience sit on benches on the stage, and Dysart addresses them several times, performing the task of mediator between the play and the audience, a function that in the Greek plays belongs to the Chorus and to the coryphaeus. The narrator "addresses both the

large audience in the theatre and the smaller one on stage" (18), enhancing the emotion of the play, guiding the attitude of solidarity towards Alan, and reinforcing comprehension.

The Chorus itself, composed of six actors playing the role of horses and creating a complex choreography, utter a humming sound and noises of the horses that "illustrate the presence of Equus the God" (Shaffer The Chorus 16). Scene 16, in which Alan goes to the stable for the first time and is going to accept the job, starts with an "exultant humming from the Chorus" (55) and with the sound of tramping. The participation of the Chorus is sonorous and richly visual. In the scene of Alan's night ride, the Chorus appears again, while there is a "[h]umming from the Chorus: the Equus noise. The horse actors enter, raise high their masks, and put them on all together. They stand around the circle—Nugget in the mouth of the tunnel" (68).

Tension is another very important element of the play, created by Alan's dilemma of obeying Equus or not, and Dysart's dilemma of treating and curing Alan or not. The tension increases with the incidents that take place before the blinding of the horses: Alan's bad dreams, Dysart's nightmares, Frank and Alan's tense meeting in the theatre and their subsequent discussion. In fact, the several minor moments of tension contribute to create the mega-effect of the central scene by the accumulation of repressed emotion. Alan's way of looking, for example, as if accusing, brings certain tension into Dysart's existence, according to Dysart, "the strangest stare I ever met" (26).

Sometimes, silence is an important way of conveying tension. When Dysart asks Alan about his mother, the answer is just "[s]ilence" (79). Besides, tension is also conveyed by surprise, by unexpected incidents, like in the scene in which Alan meets his father at the cinema, or when Alan is near to having sex with Jill but is suddenly interrupted by the Chorus of horses representing the supernatural manifestation of Equus. In fact there is no surprise in the blinding of the horses, the audience is waiting to witness it, having been prepared for it throughout the play, but there is surprise when the audience perceives that the blinding of the horses is related to Alan's sexual incapacity and to his religious obsession.

The play develops many ethical questions, like Dysart's dilemma: curing or not curing the boy, which for him is the same as killing or not killing the boy emotionally. Thus the play deals with the amputation of the emotional life of the individual in modern society, so centered around money and reason, so indifferent to the forces of transcendence, passion, and intuition. The conflict between subjectivity and society, conveyed through a religious experience in the play, stresses the repressive nature of society. The play privileges the religious feature of human life,

how deeply rooted inside the human soul it is. Alan, based on Christian myths and imagery, recreates his own version of religion, with his own god and savior, ritual, temple, and sacrifice. In fact, Alan's religion provides him with the vicarious suffering and ecstatic experience of mystic union with the Absolute. Dysart reflects the same religious concern and confirms it in his dreams of being the priest of a pagan ritual in an ancient time.

Alan's religion involves a great amount of sensuality. His relationship with god is defined in terms of organic experiences. Thus a religious moment is pictured as a sensuous experience. But it also includes pain, mental pressure, guilt, and the sharp consciousness of the omnipresence and omniscience of a god that sees all and requests total and exclusive adoration and dedication, for when Alan is tempted by Jill to experience romantic and sexual love, he enters in conflict with his god and suffers total collapse, finally blinding the horses and plunging into despair. In scene 11, Dora comes unexpectedly to talk about the photograph of the horse that takes the place of the "reproduction of Our Lord on his way to Calvary" (44), evincing the religious significance of the photograph of the horse. The picture of Christ shows extreme, passionate suffering: "The Christ was loaded down with chains, and the centurions were really laying on the stripes" (45). There are many points of contact between Christ and Equus: the vicarious minister, the Last Supper, the chains, pain and ecstasy, omnipresence, penitence and conversion.

Spectacle is very well handled in the play. The scenery is symbolic, consisting of benches disposed in a certain position in order to represent several different places at different times: Dysart's office, Alan's bedroom, Dora and Frank's house, the cinema, and the stable. It is changed during the play, without interrupting the scene, by the actors themselves. For example, at the moment Dysart urges Alan to tell about the pornographic film he had seen, "[t]he actors playing horses come swiftly on to the square, dressed in sports coats or raincoats. They move the benches to be parallel with the audience, and sit on them—staring out front" (91). In the sequence, Alan and Jill go to the stables, and the scenery is altered accordingly. Besides, all the characters are placed on the stage throughout the play, composing the scenery.

Costumes are also important visual elements of the play. Alan wears a sweater and jeans, Dysart is dressed as a doctor, and Frank is dressed as a worker of a printing firm, but the most important element worn in the play are the horse masks. The horses' masks, sounds and posture are stylized, always dignified, but sometimes their movements are very realistic and they react to touch, sound, and atmosphere. Shaffer gives a detailed report on the costumes worn by the horses:

> The actors wear track-suits of chestnut velvet. On their feet are light strutted hooves, about four inches high, set on metal horse-shoes. On their hands are gloves of the same color. On their heads are tough masks made of alternating bands of silver wire and leather; their eyes are outlined by leather blinkers. The actors' own heads are seen beneath them: no attempt should be made to conceal them.
> (The Horses 15)

The costumes of the horses are referred to again in scene 16, in conjunction with light and sound effect—"humming from the Chorus" (55) and trampings. In the sequence, the actors playing horses rise from their places and "unhook three horse masks from the ladders to left and right, put them on with rigid timing, and walk with swaying horse-motion into the square" (55). During the scene, they stamp the wood with their metal hooves and move accordingly, their masks above their heads, making them shine (55). The visual effect is superb, the body movement is stylized, the masks leave visible the faces of the actors, suggesting their characters and breaking with the illusion of reality.

Choreography, conjoined with the symbolic richness of the masks, is fundamental in the creation of the spectacle. There are many scenes in which the body movements convey the concentration of a ritual, like when the animals move together in Alan's night ride with Nugget. In fact, Alan's night ride with Nugget contains precious instances of physical movement. The sandals of Nugget seem to be a religious allusion to the sandals of Moses in the Sinai: "... put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). For Alan, they are "[s]andals of majesty!... Made of sack" (69). Alan kneels, "downstage centre, and kisses the sandals "devoutly" (69). All the scene is mimed: Alan ties the sandals around the hooves of the horse and "mimes picking up the bridle and bit" (69). The ceremony is solemn.

In the scene of blinding, sound and choreography flow in a crescendo. As Alan stabs Nugget's eyes, "a great screaming begins to fill the theatre, growing ever louder" (106). And as he blinds the other two horses, "heir metal hooves join in the stamping" (106). Suddenly, deformed horses appear, "in cones of light: not naturalistic animals like the first three, but dreadful creatures out of nightmare. Their eyes flare—their nostrils flare—thefr mouths flare (106). Their entrance into the square is hasty, and their movement is chaotic, as Alan leaps in despair, "jumping high and naked in the dark, slashing at their heads with arms upraised" (106). The choreography suggests a complete chaos, enhanced by the sharp sound of screams and the irregular sound of the hooves.

In his introductory A Note on the Text in **Equus**, Peter Shaffer recognizes the importance of stage directions in his plays, composed "not merely of the words" but "gestures, lighting, visual elements" (7).[104] In fact, the script used contains the details and descriptions of the first production of the play, in 1973 (7). Therefore the stage directions are related to that production—gestures, light, and visual effects—, but a different production could create a different approach to the play. Peter Shaffer himself recognizes that this kind of publication "can imprison a play in one particular stylization" (7), and may lead to an unjust appropriation or distortion of the original ideas of the Director—John Dexter. Shaffer praises Dexter's virtues, the solemn gestures and economy that reveal a clear influence of Noh Drama and Berthold Brecht (7).[105] Dexter also directed **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and **Black Comedy** (7). Shaffer instructs that the play should be enacted mimetically, avoiding "any literalism which could suggest the cosy familiarity of a domestic animal—or worse, a pantomime horse" (15). So, as we have seen, the actors should avoid crouching on all fours, or bending forward, preferring the upright position, "as if the body of the horse extended invisibly behind them (15).

All the characters are positioned on the stage during the play, ready to be "used" when needed, or maybe just to break with the illusion of reality. Sometimes the present time of Dysart's narrative is illustrated by the characters' participation. Like in a great court, characters are witnesses called to testify to what they know about the criminal. This technique creates interesting effects, like the contrast between physical proximity and time distance. There is a moment, for example, in which Alan is physically near Dysart, but he addresses the recording machine: "Dysart sits on the left bench listening, file in hand. Alan rises and stands directly behind him, but on the circle, as if recording the ensuing speech. He never, of course, looks directly at the Doctor" (48).

The stylized movements of the horses sometimes contrast with their physical reactions, very realistic, like when they move toward Alan and suddenly stop "as if tethered by the head,

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[104] "With the ability to utilize every resource available to him in this arena (lighting, music, choreography, communal atmosphere, and so on), Shaffer involves his audience *imaginatively* in his drama where metaphor, allusion and illusion prevail" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh 3).

[105] "Brecht's concept of 'Epic Theatre' apparently infiltrates several of Shaffer's plays, **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and **Equus** most obviously. In both, we find the use of a controlling narrator, the use of song, mime and dance in the earlier work, and the positioning of the audience as observers and even inquisitors in the later work where spectators behave as witnesses in a trial or as observers at a clinical lecture. Both plays also develop episodically, this being reminiscent of Brecht's concept of *gestus* where each 'scene' is designed as a separate piece of a wider 'story', and **Equus** in particular demands a concomitant level of intellectual awareness if the episodes are to be pieced together and interpreted with any degree of analytical sophistication" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh 28).

with their invisible rumps towards him, one by each bench" (56). While Alan is brushing Nugget, Dysart asks him delicate questions about the girl and Alan becomes nervous, up to the point of rage. When Alan screams, "[a]ll the masks toss at the noise" (58), a very realistic effect, considering the normal reactions of the animals.

The dream-like atmosphere of some scenes is intensified by the use of light and sound, especially the scenes of ecstasy, terror, and depression.[106] Light effects help to focus the attention on and guide the audience toward what is being enacted on the stage, mainly considering that all the actors are permanently on the stage and light is fundamental to focus on what is of first importance. Sometimes the whole stage is in darkness, and only a spotlight shot at a specific actor. Thus light creates an atmosphere, directs the focus of attention, enhances the message, intensifies the emotional climate of the scene, and makes very difficult scenes possible, like the scene at the cinema.[107]

The play starts in darkness and silence, then a dim light. The spotlight focuses on Alan Strang, the main character, but suddenly turns to Dysart, who is smoking downstage (17). Sometimes the light indicates a change of atmosphere, like in the first scene, in which Dysart stands up from his bench and enters the square, while the "light grows brighter" (18). When he sits the "light gets warmer" (18).

The sound effects used in the play encompass a variety of human, animal, and mechanical voices. Equus's voice is made up by the humming and hoofing of the Chorus. Its sound is explained by Shaffer as made by "all the actors sitting round upstage, and composed of humming, thumping, and stamping—though never of neighing or whinnying" (The Chorus 16). The play includes screams, sobs, sighs, moans, voices in a tape recorder, the sound of organ creating a church atmosphere, and even rock music. When Alan is talking about his work at the electricity shop, for example, demanding and aggressive voices are heard, as well as the sound of mumbling in the background of trade names and products, suggesting the neurosis implicit in commercial business (53). This sound effect contrasts consumerist icons of the modern world with the names of horses—Philco, Remington, Robex, Croydex, Volex, Pifco, beautiflor, windowlene, Hoover (54).

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[106] "Equus, more adventurously, is staged in an indeterminate acting area that may be anywhere or nowhere, and, by a bold stroke of director and designer as much as of writer, presents the dream world of the horse-obsessed boy in strongly conventionalized form, with actors in black leotards with elaborate open-work masks representing the horses of his private ritual" (Taylor "Art and Commerce" 181).

[107] In his instructions about the setting, Shaffer suggests that above the stage should "hang[...] a battery of lights, set in a huge metal ring. Light cues, in this version, will be only of the most general description" (Setting **Equus** 14).

In fact light and sound work together in the play. Thus, for example, in the hypnotism scene, sound effect is very important. While Alan nods and Dysart keeps tapping his pen on the wooden rail, the boy is hypnotized and Dysart's voice: "is replaced by a louder, metallic sound, on tape. Dysart talks through this, to the audience—the light changes to cold—while the boy sits in front of him, staring at the wall, opening and shutting his eyes" (64-5). And as the "natural sound of the pencil resumes" light changes back at the back (65).

[C] **Amadeus**

Having completed his first minuets at the age of 5 and a symphony at the age of 9, having created the richest and most profound music of all times and having died poor and abandoned at the age of 35, Mozart fascinates all those interested in the history of music and in the mystery of human life. In Mozart, fiction and reality are mixed and somehow indistinguishable; legend and history conjoin in the creation of a myth. The alleged involvement of Salieri in Mozart's death is now proved false, but there is a long tradition in that direction since Pushkin's short dramatic dialogue **Mozart and Salieri** (1836) suggesting that Salieri poisoned Mozart out of envy. And the Russian composer Nicolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) created an opera based on Pushkin's play.

Although Peter Shaffer could have used plenty of the critically received biographies available, he preferred the traditional tale of Salieri's machination in order to approach the story of Mozart's life and death. In fact, Shaffer's play shows Salieri as the great architect of Mozart's death, in part moved by envy of Mozart's musical talent but mainly by a visceral hatred of God, who had chosen Mozart and rejected him. The play also contrasts the freedom of the individual and the sovereignty of God. The situation is tragic: Salieri, in despair and near death, recollects his fight against God, who blessed and inspired Mozart.[108] During the play, Salieri confesses his participation in Mozart's death, who is seen as a mere victim of Salieri's malignity. Salieri's punishment by God is also tragic: not immediate death, but eternal oblivion, an eternal sentence

[108] According to Frye, Christianity is not tragic, for it pressuposes the final salvation: "Christianity, too, sees tragedy as an episode in the divine comedy, the larger scheme of redemption and resurrection. The sense of tragedy as a prelude to comedy seems almost inseparable from anything explicitly Christian" (Frye 215). However, Christianity also conceives the possibility of eternal damnation for those who do not accept the authority of God. Salieri, as well as Yonadab, belongs to this group for whom there is no hope of redemption.

for a temporal sin, while Mozart's memory is progressively revived. He attempts suicide, ironically declaring himself the Saint of Mediocrities.

The element of *mimesis* has a peculiar significance in **Amadeus**, a fictional work showing historical figures on a historical setting and situation but following a spurious tradition inspired by fabulous rumors of Salieri's responsibility for Mozart's death. Indeed the whole story is based on another fiction, according to which the great musician lived in a state of continuous immaturity and became the victim of Salieri's envy and scheme. In Shaffer's **Amadeus** the ambiguity and the unreliability of the narrative are suggested by the gossipy contribution of the Venticelli, although Salieri's posture of confession conveys profound remorse and crude honesty, certainly counterbalanced by his cynicism. The references to real cities—Vienna, London, Paris—, palaces—Schönbrunn—, personalities like Mozart himself, Salieri, Metternich, and Beethoven (10), besides masters like Chevalier Gluck and Rossini and their distinct forms of art (15), and to real incidents of Mozart's life convey a sense of realism. Although some scenes are not historically confirmed, they are plausible and all the emotions represented on the stage are real and touch the center of human psychology: envy, need of recognition, dreams of fame and glory, the tormenting force of lust, and the rigorous presence of God.

Even the most precise historical narratives can be seen as fictitious in a certain philosophical way, as mere reports, just versions of facts. They are not absolute truths by themselves, they are not totally objective and neutral. However, in **Amadeus** Salieri ambiguously pretends to make a false confession of a crime, as if he were not responsible for Mozart's death. In fact, each scene of the play shows how consciously and carefully he planned and executed his crime. Paradoxically, although he denies the authorship of the crime, he wants the fame, or rather the infamy, it guarantees. He committed the crime but denies it, although he wants to be known as a criminal. Thus the author plays with *mimesis*.

There are really many discordant points between the tradition of the intrigue and the historical data available about Mozart and Salieri: their rivalry, Salieri's incompetence, Mozart's progressive isolation, Mozart's love affair with Constanze, the number of his children, his lack of popularity, his effortless, easy, almost divinely inspired way of composing, the mysterious figure resembling death at the end of the play, and the decadent collective burial. The documents available are composed of Mozart's several letters, historical testimonies, official documents, and the work of several serious biographers of Mozart and Salieri. Shaffer's intention is not historical, but esthetical and theatrical, respecting one of the clearest distinctions Aristotle perceived

between history and literature. Shaffer's work is a recreation, a representation, a free reformulation of historical facts.

Altering the objective view of life, the author uses ritualized gestures, antique social conventions, and non-realistic language such as stylized dialogues, to recreate the world of the play. This notion of *mimesis* as representation, as something more than the mere copy of reality, can be grasped even through the symbolic scenery, only suggestive of Rococo style, but modern in all its general aspects, according to the author's recommendation:

> The set consisted basically of a handsome rectangle of patterned wood, its longest sides leading away from the viewer, set into a stage of ice-blue plastic. This surface shifted beguilingly under various lights played upon it, to show gunmetal grey, or azure, or emerald green, and reflect the actors standing upon it. The entire design was undeniably modern, yet it suggested without self-consciousness the age of the Rococo. (Author's Notes 5)

In contrast, objects and costumes are more realistic, "sumptuously of the period, and should always be so wherever the play is produced" (5).

Another touch of ambiguity is provided by Salieri's last confession at the end of the play. He still wants fame and victory in his war against God, but death is coming. Salleri prepares his last movement and says that he does not want to be a "joke for Eternity. I *will* be remembered! *I will be remembered!*—if not in fame, then infamy. One moment more and I win battle with Him. Watch and see!" (102). Salieri is near to making his last move, presenting a "false confession—short and convincing!" (102). In fact, by saying that his confession was false and that his contrition intended celebrity through infamy, he makes reality rather confusing. By confessing to be the murderer of Mozart, Salieri was playing a role in order to survive in history as Mozart's assassin. The truth is not on the surface of what is being stated, but behind the words and the malignant motivations.

The action in **Amadeus** reveals intense and consistent unity centered on the conflict between Salieri and Mozart (on the surface level), and between Salieri and God (on the deep level). The unity of place is evident (Vienna), but the time of the play is complex, starting and finishing at the moment of Salieri's confession and death, and including a long sequence of scenes in flashback. The play focuses on Salieri's persistent process of vengeance against God, who chooses Mozart and rejects him. And the vengeance is achieved through Mozart, God's chosen servant. Salieri himself makes clear to the audience that his "quarrel wasn't with Mozart—it was *through* him! Through him to God who loved him so. [*Scornfully*] *Amadeus!*...

Amadeus!..." (60). Indeed, the action is complete; it has a beginning, a middle and an end, displaying the same main motif: the origin of Salieri's envy, the justification of his motives, his plan of vengeance, the execution of the plan, Mozart's death, Salieri's sudden recognition that God has won the war, and Salieri's attempted suicide, condemned to be remembered for his mediocrity and malignity. The action has a good magnitude; it is not too great or too complex, it has a focus, and good proportions.

The action of the play follows the law of cause and consequence and thus denotes unity, another Aristotelian principle. The action is plausible and leads to its necessary end. Considering the intensity of Salieri's envy and the absoluteness of God's sovereignty, the end becomes inevitable: Mozart's death and Salieri's despair. The unity of action is also enhanced by the fluidity, the continuity of the scenes. Like in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and in **Equus**, there are no great divisions or pauses.

The action is complex, because it includes the elements of reversal of fortune and recognition. It is tragic and serious, showing the ruin of one of the most important composers of the history of music due to an individual who questions God's sovereignty at a time when religion was very strong in society and the only reason for music. At the same time, it shows Mozart's posterious glory and Salieri's growing decadence and defeat. He does not even succeed in his own suicide, and later nobody believes his participation in Mozart's death. The play therefore shows scenes of human frailty, wickedness, and ruin. Mozart's life is destroyed, his personality is broken; Salieri's personality is broken as well, and his life is devastated. The individual is apparently defeated in his fight against the sovereignty of God, although Salieri indeed provides for his memory after death.[109]

Once more, the protagonist of the play is also the narrator of the story. Salieri stands out as the protagonist by the actions he performs and by the choices he makes. He is able to articulate himself with sagacity of judging, seducing, planning, and destroying Mozart and himself, i.e., moving the story on. However, Salieri does not fit the role of the hero in Aristotelian terms, because he is too evil. In fact, what characterizes him is precisely his wickedness and cruelty. He seems to have no feelings, only mind. His cynicism confirms it. Belonging to the upperclass and moving in the court of Emperor Joseph, his moral virtues are a fraud. He acknowledges his own

[109] It seems to confirm Costa's view that tragedy usually shows a tension between the divine and the human, the mythical and the rational (Costa 9). The hero wants to follow his own *ethos* (character), but he is dominated and imprisoned by the *daimon* (the evil) (9).

mediocrity, his envy, and his meanness. In fact, the protagonist is true to life in the sense of showing the general tendency of humankind to gluttony, vanity, pitilessness, selfishness, competition, cruelty and crime. Salieri is inconsistent, being admired by his contemporaries, enjoying mundane success, and at the same time being assaulted by envy when he first meets Mozart. Nevertheless, Salieri displays unquestionable virtues: his love of music and his love of God, for whom he worked hard, perfecting his art, learning, composing, arranging. His excess of love, probably, became sour when he saw Mozart's effortless way of composing sublime pieces of music, almost automatically. In fact, Mozart was the great virtuoso, the genius, unique in his musical creativity and divine inspiration. Paradoxically, this talented man died poor and forgotten, buried in an anonymous grave, and Salieri is the symbol of the frustrated man who lived under the shadows of Mozart's geniality. Indeed, Salieri is perfectly consistent with the world he abides, the falsehood of the Venticelli, the intrigues in court, the Emperor's vain adoration of success and glory.

Salieri's *hybris* is related to his wish of fame and recognition before God and posterity, his dream of being appointed as God's first servant. This necessity of divine and human praise poisons his soul and drives him to murder Mozart out of envy. Salieri is full of arrogance and presumption before God, to the point of declaring war against Him and playing god himself, trying if possible to overcome and destroy Him by ruining Mozart in a devilish project, an allusion maybe to the work of the Devil, hurting God through his beloved creatures. And since God does not accept Salieri's proposal, he becomes his enemy:

> From this time we are enemies, You and I! I'll not accept it from You—*Do you hear?*... They say God is not mocked. I tell you, *Man* is not mocked! *I* am not mocked!... They say the spirit bloweth where it listeth: I tell you NO! It must list to virtue or not blow at all! [Yelling] *Dios Ingiusto!*—You are the Enemy! I name Thee now—*Nemico Eterno!* And this I swear. To my last breath I shall *block* you on earth, as far as I am able! [*He glares up at God. To audience*] What use, after all, is Man, if not to teach God His lessons? (56)

Saheri's *hybris*, presented almost in Biblical terms, brings against him the silent *nemesis* of God, when at the end Mozart is redeemed to a condition of immortal glory, while Salieri is cast out into a state of eternal disdain: his glory is placed on the altar of mediocrity and, as we have seen, he is proclaimed the saint of the mediocres. Indeed, Salieri alludes to the fall of Adam and his sense of emptiness and nakedness (55).

Salieri's envy of Mozart, his hatred of God, and his exceeding passion for fame and vain glory are the propellers of his *hamartia*, which is not a minor error but an alleged crime. His *hamartia* is more than a mistake; it is a well-planned and executed crime, having a strong moral weight and serious consequences: Mozart's financial, domestic, mental ruin and final death, as well as Salieri's own insanity, remorse, and despair. Besides being the result of his lack of balance, Salieri's *hamartia* is also the fruit of a conscious free decision, an open challenge to God's decrees. He is at the same time the planner and doer of his own vengeance, and the judge, confessor, and executioner of his own crime.

The alleged murder of Mozart is the climax of the play, embodying every small moment of retaliation. But Mozart also contributes with his virtues and defects to provoke and justify Salieri's crime: his excess of honesty, his frankness, his naïveté, his lack of maturity, his talent, his virtuosity, his shining smile, his shrill laugh, his daring eyes, and his sublime music. In his ironic prayer, Salieri regrets that a man so irresponsible like Mozart can write so wonderful music, but moral virtue does not guarantee artistic excellence. He blames God for the rejection of his own serious art:

> *Grazie*, Signore! You gave me the desire to serve you—which most men do not have—then saw to it the service was shameful in the ears of the server. *Grazie!* You gave me the desire to praise you—which most do not feel—then made me mute. *Grazie tante!* You put into me perception of the Incomparable—which most men never know!—then ensured that I would know myself forever mediocre. (55)

Salieri's prayer makes God the real sinner, the one responsible for the reward of the irresponsible one and for Salieri's own mediocrity.

The element of *anagnorisis* is evident when Salieri recognizes the seriousness of his crime, his secondary position in the history of music, his being remembered as the murderer of Mozart, the permanent excellence of Mozart's art, and the final victory of God. Recognizing the impossibility of achieving fame through virtue, Salieri finds consolation in notoriety through infamy. Although Salieri's deeds are done in knowledge and he is always under the fear of God's intervention, there is a special moment when he recognizes his acts and their consequences, by reasoning on the events themselves. He apparently feels remorse but he does not repent and he does not stop his plan of vengeance. However, he learns something about his own destiny and human fragility, although there is no redemption, no moral improvement. Salieri's recognition makes him even more ironic, cruel, sadistic, and despairing. Although his doom is foreshadowed, it comes suddenly as he recognizes the fading of his glory. Salieri repeats the Satanic tragic

course, wanting to shine like God, tempting and seducing human beings, falling from his position near God for the love of glory and adoration, and being finally defeated. Salieri's moment of recognition of God's punishment and of his own wickedness and change of fortune is provided by his own suffering and insight. In **Amadeus** *peripety* comes at the end of the play, concomitant with *anagnorisis*, with Salieri's complete decadence and attempted suicide. In fact, when the story begins, he is already in his crucial moment and most of the play is a recollection of his life. But soon after Mozart's death, having destroyed his adversary and being ready to collect the rewards of his victory, he falls terribly perplexed.

The scene of *pathos* can be easily identified in Mozart's collapse and death. He is totally innocent and suspects that his life is being intentionally and systematically destroyed by Salieri: "Salieri... Salieri has killed me" (98). But Mozart's suspicions were not taken seriously by his wife or by society. His suffering is pathetic, so is the blockage of his talent, the ruin of his family, the corrosion of his physical and mental health, but his music remains untouched. In contrast with Mozart's death, Salieri's final days were not surrounded by a halo of innocence. He finishes in terrible despair and guilt. His suffering was preceded by glory and success, by crime and illusion, contrasting with Mozart's continuous decadence.

Pity and fear are more evident in the scenes of suffering, related to Mozart's unjust, and pathetic ruin as a result of Salieri's conspiration. The audience pities the great talented man being destroyed by the weak, wicked, and mediocre one. The scene showing Mozart's tears and Constanze's suffering in carrying away their baby triggers the audience's pity. When she comes back and sees Mozart's alienation, affliction is intense again. Mozart sings and "kisses the air, several times. Finally he becomes aware of his wife standing beside him" (98). Their meeting is touching, Constanze acts with "great tenderness" while he "virtually falls off the table into her arms" (98). Mozart acts as a child: "He clings to her in overwhelming pleasure. She helps him gently to move around the table to the chair behind it, facing out front" (98).

The same scene that brings pity can bring fear to the audience, fear of being in the same situation as victims of a malignant force, kept in the shadows without an opportunity, without letting the talents bloom, without a chance of recognition and reward. The audience can also identify with Salieri's small weaknesses and feel fear for them: his gluttony, his lust, his wish of being the best one, his religious pride, his necessity of being accepted by God, and his fear of being rejected. Thus pity and fear are triggered by the display of undeserved misfortune and human frailties. Mozart's ruin and death and Salieri's eternal condemnation are the sources of

those emotional experiences. The audience pities and fears the fragility of human life, the limits of human judgements, and the misery of the human situation. Even good qualities can be disastrous or limited by chance or destiny, like Salieri's religious zeal was obliterated by his ambition, vanity and rebelion against God's choice.

However, curiously and contrasting with the great heroes of the Greek tragedies, Salieri wants no pity from the audience, but justice; he demands what he thinks he deserves. He feels morally superior to the audience, and even to God. He does not want forgiveness either and he does not live any signs of repentance. He knows that "Goodness could not make me a good composer. Was Mozart good? Goodness is nothing in the furnace of art" (58). He justifies his lack of pity for Mozart with God's lack of pity for him: "Could I not have stopped my war? Shown him some pity? Oh yes, my friends, at any time—if He above had shown me one drop of it!" (78)

Related to the experience of pity and fear, *catharsis* is an evident effect of the play and includes the cleansing of envy, selfishness, mediocrity, and that through the representation of those vices as well as the damages they cause in the lives of Mozart, Constanze, and Salieri himself. In fact, Mozart dies sacrificially and Salieri suffers in penance, so that the audience can experience atonement. Mozart dies on the altar of sacrifice in the kingdom of mediocrity, for the benefit of a vain society that demands talent and rewards fashionable mediocrity. And Salieri is his priest and an anti-saint who intercedes for the audience, offering even moments of mystical ecstasy, while Mozart provides the background music of the sublime, some important triggers of *catharsis*. Mozart's breakdown at the end of the play offers another chance for the experience of *catharsis*, providing a great dose of pity and fear. As a lesson for the audience, the play seems to propose the acceptance of the ambiguities of life and of the painful limits of mediocrity, and the acknowledge of the dangerous force of envy and other passions. In a way, the play invites to forgiveness, to tolerance, if not acceptance of this man haunted by guilt, who becomes an archetype of the Promethean, modern, secular man, no more elect by God.

The show of Salieri's final condition as an obstinate desperate saint of the mediocres offers a vicarious experience to society, an opportunity for cleaning injustice, vanity, selfishness, indifference, and inhumanity. Human nature is not altered, but critically recaptured and its weaknesses openly faced. Religion and society are exposed and the court and the church musicians presented as being entangled in a complex net of hostility and competition, frustration and resentment, retaliation and remorse. Salieri incarnates the despair of any religious redemption

and becomes the mockery of a saint, laughing at God and at the audience until the end. In fact, **Amadeus**, as a good example of tragedy, has a lesson to offer: the awareness of the unreliability of human reason and projects. It conveys the acknowledgement that the individual's view can be deformed by his passions. Salieri is blinded by his envy of Mozart, by his hatred of God, by his lust, gluttony, and vanity, either great or small defects which are common and serious human weaknesses. His spiritual blindness can be superficially compared to Oedipus' blindness. The forces of passion, the fight against the gods' decrees, and the bloody end also appear in **Oedipus**. But Salieri's suffering is different from Oedipus'; he suffers in full consciousness of his deeds, and in total culpability. Oedipus's *hamartia* was accidental, Salieri's crime was planned and wittinly executed.

Tragedy traditionally offers the affirmation of human dignity, a declaration that life is worthy, that the individual is morally superior to the reversals of life.[110] In fact, **Amadeus** offers good examples of dignity, like Constanze's behavior, returning to Mozart and taking care of him in his moment of death and Mozart's dignity being restored by God at the end of the play and confirmed in history. But Salieri's dignity is lost forever, sunk in a sea of resigned and cynical mediocrity, hypocrisy, and wickedness. However, Salieri's malignity is punished while Mozart's suffering is sanctified and morality is consecrated. The play is not nihilistic, not too pessimistic. It does not finish in meaninglessness. The world has a meaning, although this meaning is sad and men are mediocre and wicked. However, the play does not finish in hope of redemption, or in human optimism; Salieri is too ironic to accept it, he is full of despair and his end is sad. Ambiguously, he recognizes being defeated by God and chosen to be the patron of the mediocres of the world, but that was his choice: to be eternal not by the mediation of fame but as instrument of infamy. Evil remains an eternal companion, an appendix to God's best prized servants, as long as Salieri's fame wili come linked with Mozart's, the chosen servant.

Having studied the play according to the Aristotelian characteristics, let us now see the theatrical devices used by Peter Shaffer. The first important device to be analyzed is language. The author uses languages in a virtuoso way, adopting different registers and styles. Sometimes the language used is very stylized, as when the Venticelli come at the beginning of the play and seem to perform a recitation, in a very unusual way of gossiping. The rhythm is important here, like in a poem:

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[110] Anatol Rosenfeld says: "A tragédia apresenta a vontade humana no seu desafio às forças do universo e da história, mostra o homem sofrendo, mas resistindo ao sofrimento graças à sua dignidade sublime e indestrutível" (22).

Venticello 1: They say.
Venticello 2: I hear
Venticello 1: I hear.
Venticello 2: They say. (10)

Sometimes, as in Mozart's dialogues with Constanze, for example, the language used is very conversational and even childish, revealing the sort of relationship they have. In addition, foreign terms and expressions abound in the play, suggesting time and place and providing for characterization. Salieri uses the Italian language very much, and usually in the most important moments of the play; in his conversations with God, when his anguish is intense or his pleasure uncontrollable, or when the social convention demands, or when the occasion makes it relevant, as when his Italian origin must be emphasized.

Informal language is an effective vehicle for characterization. Thus Constanze uses uneducated language: "Oh, 'scuse me!" (38), seeming to be very timid and revealing her humble origin: "Ta very much!" (50). Sometimes Mozart's language can be full of vulgar terms mixed with terms of music, as when he addresses Orsini-Rosenberg: "You shit-pot. Woppy, foppy, wet-arsed, Italian-loving shit-pot!" (70). And while Orsini-Rosenberg leaves the stage, Mozart keeps screaming: "Count Orsini-Rosenshit!... Rosencunt! Rosenbugger!..." (70). The scene marks Mozart's youth, his bad mood, and lack of control.

The dialogues, in their dynamic movement, are most important to establish human relations. Mozart's dialogues with Constanze, for example, convey all the childishness of their love affair, their passion, their youth and happiness. They also present the tender moments of love and compassion in the play, mainly when Mozart is near death. The dialogue between Salieri and Constanze conveys his arrogance as well as her naïveté and growing dignity. Mozart's dialogues with Salieri enhance Salieri's falsehood, irony and cynicism, while still presenting Mozart's naïveté and presumption. Mozart's dialogues with the Emperor make evident Mozart's exaggerated demonstrations of gratitude and servility. When the figure of death appears, indeed Salieri in disguise, Mozart reveals his despair, and Salieri his cynicism and hypocrisy. Mozart's aversion to the Italians, and his ambiguous attitude of disgust and respect for Salieri is also evident in the play.

Dialogues offer the frame in which language can be used significantly. Thus the dialogues in the court give the audience a notion of the values of that society, their pedantic attitudes, ceremoniousness, showy behavior, and social differences. Besides, dialogues also show Salieri's ambiguous relationship with God, changing from extreme devotion and a compact of fidelity and

consecration to total revolt and hateful indignation. God is always silent, thus Salieri takes his place and formulates his answers. In these dialogues with God Salieri reveals all his deep dreams, the darkness of his soul, his defenselessness, his sadness, rage, and despair.

Besides the great number of dialogues, the play shows, from the beginning to the end, a great number of asides, in which Salieri addresses the audience directly and honestly. In fact, the play has a climate of confession, and Salieri counts on the audience's complicity. In a way, the play as a whole can be seen as a great aside, a long narrative reported by Salieri. Sometimes complex dialogues are suddenly interrupted and the actors freeze, so that the Narrator can give his aside. There is a scene in which Salieri addresses both Mozart and the audience (33), and another in which.the Venticelli address Bonno and Mozart in a room and at the same time talk to Salieri in another (40).

Although a Chorus is neither mentioned in the "Author's Notes" nor in the list of characters of the play, it is present in **Amadeus**, and it is totally different from the classical one, dissolved among the many characters and elements of the play: Salieri, the Venticelli, the music score and the operas and cantatas inside the play. The Venticelli represent society in general, always wandering, wondering, and bringing news about Mozart's social life and the court, incorporating the values and concerns of the court. They are ironic and we cannot trust their sincerity or their concern with Mozart's suffering. Indeed, they provide the play with new information about Mozart, and eventually about other characters, like the Messengers in the Greek tragedies, but they do not mediate the relation between the play and the audience. In addition, the information they bring is always given in the form of gossip, always tendentious. They mediate Salieri's relation with Mozart, but their attitude is distant, without emotional engagement, without pity. In fact, they are totally committed to Salieri, in a great complicity with his plans of vengeance, even feeding his hatred and spicing his heart with more envy and indignation.

The mediation between the play and the audience is provided by Salieri, the real Narrator and the protagonist of the play as well, responsible for the sense of fear and, indirectly, by opposition, for the pity of the audience in relation to the innocent suffering of Mozart. He is responsible for conveying and enhancing the emotional component of the play, introducing and commenting on each character of the play, including Mozart. Even when he is cold and indifferent, he directs the emotional side of the play, causing indignation, provoking a reaction, touching the viscera of the audience. He suggests attitudes, he demands complicity, he defends

his viewpoint, and he wants to justify his presence on the stage and in the history of music. He speaks informally, confessionally, almost intimately and uses a diction more akin to the modern audience than to the 18th century world. Salieri, taking the place of the ancient Chorus, invokes the gods, his God, and consecrates himself to His service. However, differently from the pious Greek Chorus, as his relationship with God becomes ambiguous and despairing, Salieri declares God his Enemy and starts a war against Him. Accumulating the functions of narrator and protagonist, Salieri affects the destiny of the other characters of the play, mainly Mozart's. As the Narrator is indifferent to Mozart's death, the cathartic force of the play must be provided by the inspiring strength of Mozart's music as a sound track, and by the operas presented inside the play.

In **Amadeus**, characterization includes the articulation of language, gestures, costumes, dialogues and scenery, as well as the interaction among the characters. Thus, Mozart's attitudes toward the others reveal his own identity; and Salieri's complicity with the audience enhances his falsehood towards Mozart. Considering that all characters are functional, they are not mere independent personalities, but a net of complex and significant relations. Salieri's profoundly developed character is counterbalanced by his opponent Mozart, amazingly less developed. Salieri speaks 934 lines and Mozart only 474. Besides, Salieri changes from an intense devotion to God and music to full hatred against God and his servant, and never hiding his own iniquity.

In contrast, the Venticelli are simply types, used to represent the whole state of society, to develop some important elements of the story, and to bring information about changes in the play related to Mozart. They have no opinion of their own, any individuality, therefore they are always a pair. They present old Salieri as a tormented, decadent man with a guilty conscience (11-2). At the end of the play, they announce his decrepitude, quoting a newspaper entitled **The German Musical Times**, May 25th, 1825:

> Our worthy Salieri just cannot die. In the frenzy of his imagination
> he is even said to accuse himself of complicity in Mozart's early death.
> A rambling of the mind believed in truth by no one but the deluded
> old man himself. (104)

Salieri introduces and comments on the characters of the play. He characterizes even the audience, addressing it as "Ghosts of the Future! Shades of Time to come!... The yet-to-be-born! The yet-to-hate! The yet-to-kill!... Posterity!" (14-5). This artifice breaks the illusion of the

separation between the actors and the audience, the invisible fourth wall.[111] In a tone of confession, Salieri reveals his humble Italian origin, a "Lombardy merchant and his Lombardy wife," his ambition, his wish of success so firmly inscribed in the story of his family, so fundamental in his character. And his ambition is colored with a religious tone, for he sees God as a tradesman. The kind of God who impressed Salieri was one with "dealer's eyes," one who was able to trade—therefore Salieri calls him "the God of Bargains" (16).

After Mozart's death, Salieri's success is confirmed by the citizens of Vienna, who would "bow and kiss their hands to him" and fall "on their knees before him, clapping their hands silently, and relentlessly extending their arms upwards and upwards, almost obliterating him" (101). But slowly he "understood the nature of God's punishment! What had I begged for in that church as a boy? Was it not fame?... Fame for excellence?... Well now I had fame! I was to become—quite simply—the most famous musician in Europe!" (101). God's punishment was to tie him with strings of glory being conscious of his own mediocrity, and make him undergo sudden oblivion.

Mozart, besides being characterized by his arrogance, his infantile language, his passion for Constanze, his conflict with Salieri, as well as his resentment towards his father, is also characterized by his giggles, his extravagant wigs, his exaggerated gestures of gratitude, his sense of humor, and his free mind and dangerously open mouth. According to the stage direction, he is "an extremely restless man, his hands and feet in almost continuous motion; his voice is light and high, possessed by an unforgettable giggle—piercing and infantile" (24). His exaggerated gestures and words can also be seen as indication of his panic facing the menacing environment of the court (32). Mozart's decadence becomes a painful spectacle when he comes to present his opera and the audience sees an awkward man coming in "quickly from the left, wearing another bright coat, and carrying the score of Figaro" (68). At the end of the play Mozart becomes a child and speaks in a childish way: "Take me, Papa. Take me. Put down your arms and I'll hop into them. Just as we used to do it!... Hop-hop-hop-hop-Up!" (97). His alienation is enhanced by his last words, in Constanze's arms, speaking like a child: "Salieri... Salieri has killed me" (98).

The structure of **Amadeus** respects the principles of significance, coherence, and unity, having only one central conflict, only one protagonist, and only one perspective: Salieri's. It contains all the basic elements of a tragedy: exposition, complication, climax, and dénouement. The exposition part corresponds to the Greek *Párodos* (prologue) and includes the Venticelli's

[111] This is a clear influence from Brecht's view about theatre.

first entrance, which prepares for Salieri's first words presenting the main facts and the confessional tone of the play: "The first sin I have to confess to you is Gluttony" (15), and his metaphor presenting the play as his "last composition, entitled **The Death of Mozart**, or **Did I Do It?**" (17). In the Exposition, Salieri also establishes the general mood of the play, the place and time, the atmosphere, the scheme of probability. The development of the play includes complications, foreshadowings, Salieri's aspirations, Mozart's arrival at court, Salieri's conflicts with God, his plan of vengeance on Mozart, the intrigues in court, and the progressive blockage of Mozart's career. The Climax of the play coincides with Mozart's death, allegorically poisoned and haunted by Salieri. Immediately after the climax, Salieri recognizes that, in spite of his success, God is the victorious one. In the sequence, the "Reconciliation" scene comes, showing Salieri as a survivor in a new situation. His hatred and despair are even greater. The Epilogue brings Salieri's last words, after his attempted suicide and the Venticelli's last appearance, as the "Patron Saint of Mediocrities" who absolves and blesses "Mediocrities everywhere—now and to come" (103-4).

In addition, the structure of the play respects the principles of causality and consequence; there is no illogical scene. The beginning and the end are interlinked and offer symmetry to the general design. Each scene is related to the climax. The main conflicts of the play are Salieri's envy of Mozart's divine gifts and Salieri's struggle against God. These conflicts are made visible by the structure itself: the climax is placed in a privileged position, at the very end. Minor conflicts are placed in a secondary position and receive the appropriate consideration, like the Emperor's interdiction of ballet in operas, Salieri's tentative of seducing Constanze, or the intrigues in court. The play has only two acts, and the scenes flow without interruption. Act One is the preparation for the act of vengeance, and act Two is its execution.

Although there are no songs by a Chorus to mark the changes and separate the many scenes, the several musical pieces punctuate the scenes and arrange the play, creating its atmospliere.[112] Salieri, soon as the play begins, suggests that it will follow an operatic scheme: "Raise you up in the flesh to be my last, last audience?... Does it take an Invocation? That's how it's always done in opera! Ah yes, of course: that's it. An *Invocation*!" (14); and also: "And

[112] Here the influence of Artaud is most evident, since "Artaud registra ali [no Teatro da Crueldade] a importância que atribui a uma verdadeira *partitura sonora* que possa reger o jogo conjugado das vozes, dos ruídos e da música, com o único objetivo de atingir fisicamente o espectador no mais profundo do seu ser. Essa partitura deve estar, aliás, articulada com um conjunto não menos rigorosamente elaborado que poderia ser chamado a *partitura visual* do espetáculo" (Roubine 160).

now—Gracious Ladies! Obliging Gentlemen! I present to you—for one performance only—my last composition, entitled **The Death of Mozart**..." (17). The rapid exciting musical pieces of the beginning and middle of the play are replaced with the gloomy and heavy notes of the last part, evincing the crescent tension and the proximity of the climax.

A fundamental device that is provided by a good structure is tension, which comes from the interaction between the main and the minor conflicts. The suspense provided by the structure of the play accumulates tensions that lead to Mozart's death. In fact, Salieri's narrative makes Mozart's death inevitable and necessary. But surprise is also used, like Mozart's first entrance on the stage and Constanze's last return just minutes before his death. Since the beginning, the audience expects Salieri's confession of his involvement in Mozart's death, which is confirmed by each scene showing Salieri's spiritual devotion to music and to religion, his shock when meeting Mozart and listening to his music for the first time, his envy, the plans of vengeance carefully executed, and Mozart's death.

The pauses, in the dialogues or in Salieri's speeches, denote sometimes hesitation, sometimes pain, and reinforce tension, creating an atmosphere of expectancy and fear, while the comic scenes help to alleviate the tension. There is a comic scene in which Mozart, with Constanze and Salieri, imitates a fart. It releases tension and generates others. In the moment of the rehearsal of "The Marriage of Figaro," tension is enhanced by pause, as well as by count Orsini-Rosenberg's entrance unnoticed by Mozart (41). And when Mozart argues with him and calls him a toad, Mozart "giggles" (41), in a sign of tension.

Amadeus presents a fundamental theme—envy—although many other themes can be listed, related to the main one, like the freedom of the individual versus the sovereignty of God, the human tendency to vanity, the illusion of fame, the passion for music, the dream of celebrity in contrast with the fear of mediocrity, the necessity of being chosen by God to do something special, the fear of being rejected, the malignity of human nature, and the destructiveness of a society that promotes competition. Salieri felt the sting of envy when he listened to Mozart's music for the first time: "It seemed to me I had heard a voice of God—and that it issued from a creature whose own voice I had also heard—and it was the voice of an obscene child!" (27). He cannot understand how God could choose a man like Mozart and ironically aknowledges: "my sublime privilege—is to be the sole man alive in this time who shall clearly recognize your Incarnation!" (56).

Religion is always present in Salieri's recollections of childhood, of how music was important in his early life. Soon Salieri's ambition becomes a deal with God: "Signore, let me be a composer! Grant me sufficient fame to enjoy it. In return I will live with virtue. I will strive to better the lot of my fellows. And I will honour You with much music all the days of my life! As I said Amen, I saw his eyes flare" (16). Salieri, as if he were a skilful ventriloquist, makes God answer: "'*Bene*. Go forth Antonio. Serve Me and Mankind—and you will be blessed!'" (16), a religious as well as a humanitarian aim for his music. However, with the appearance of Mozart, Salieri's compact with God is broken and God becomes his enemy.

Scenery is another very important device used by Shaffer in **Amadeus**. According to the author's notes, **Amadeus** can be enacted in a variety of settings, and in a variety of ways. The edition I used brings the indications of scenery "based on the exquisite formulation found for the play by the designer John Bury, conjured into being by the director, Peter Hall" (Shaffer Author's Notes **Amadeus** 5). The stage has more than one level and represents more than one place. Scenery is balanced and restrained, a wooden rectangle, a small table, an empty cake-stand and a small handbell, an empty wheelchair, a fortepiano, a large chandelier, and the separate space called the Light Box at the back (5-6). In addition there are many details like the several colors and plastic and wooden materials. The setting is modern, although the decoration suggests the rococo style. The surface of the stage "shifted beguilingly under various lights played upon it, to show gunmetal grey, or azure, or emerald green, and reflect the actors standing upon it. The entire design was undeniably modern, yet it suggested without self-consciousness the age of the Rococo" (5).[113]

The Light Box is a very creative and effective way of conveying information and creating an atmosphere. It also provides the changes of scenery, sometimes with the projection of images. In the fifth scene, for example, the Baroness Waldstäden's Library appears in the Light Box, but when Salieri leaves the room and runs on the stage, "in the Light Box the Library fades into a street scene at night: small houses under a rent sky" (27). Many flashback scenes are represented using this expedient. Interestingly, the scenery changes without the curtains being closed, representing a spectacle by itself.

[113] It is valid here to remember A. Artaud's commentary on how theatrical devices can be poetically used. A. Artaud speaks of "spacial poetry" and its peculiar imagery (28). Means of dramatic language: music, dance, plastic art, mimicry, mime, gesture, voice inflexion, architecture, lighting and decor (28). They have their own poetry, their own irony in the several combinations: signs, gestures, posture (29), mimicry, symbols, dance, music (30).

In addition, the scenery includes a blue curtain, a golden light on Emperor Joseph II and his court, and a golden fireplace. Scene five presents as scenery "two elegantly curtained windows surrounded by handsome subdued wallpaper" (23). In the sequence, "[t]wo servants bring on a large table loaded with cakes and desserts. Two more carry on a grand high-backed wing-chair, which they place ceremoniously at the left" (23). Scene 14 happens at the Emperor's Palace of Schönbrunn, where the "Emperor stands before the vast fireplace, between the golden mirrors" (61).

In the interesting scene in which Mozart's **The Marriage of Figaro** is going to be presented, the scenery presents the audience in the theatre, assuming that the real audience stands for the stage:

> The theatre glows with light for the first performance of Figaro. Courtiers and Citizens come in swiftly. The Emperor and his Court resume their seats and the others quickly take theirs. In the front row we note Katherina Cavalieri, all plumes and sequins, and Kapell Meister Bonno—older than ever. Behind them sit Constanze and the Venticelli. All of them stare out at the audience as if it were the opera they have come to see: people of fashion down front; poorer people crowded into the Light Box upstage. (73)

The audience becomes the stage and the theater actors become the audience.

Almost at the end of the play, the stage is divided and stands for two different places: Mozart's and Salieri's apartments. The scene starts with the entrance of the Venticelli, announcing Mozart's work on his secret opera about Masonry, revealing all its secret ceremonies (86). Suddenly, Mozart leaves the space of his house and invades the space of Salieri's house, "holding his bottle, and sits on one of the gilded chairs" (89).

Changes of scenery occur during the play, while the actors play their roles, like in the Kabuki theater,[114] as we can know by author's "Notes". The servants

> move the furniture and carry on props with ease and correctness, while the action proceeds around them. Through a pleasant paradox of theatre their constant coming and going, bearing tables, chairs or cloaks, should render them virtually invisible, and certainly unremarkable. This will aid the play to be acted throughout in its proper manner: with the sprung line, gracefulness and energy for which Mozart is so especially celebrated. (6)

Action is continuous like in **The Royal Hunt** and **Equus**. In the third scene, the servants come and take away "the dressing-robe and shawl," place a wig-stand on the table, and bring on a chair

[114] This is also part of the so-called "suspension of disbelief," so essential for literature and mainly for the theater.

"at the left, upstage" (17). The transition between the tenth and eleventh scenes, for example, is made on the stage, with the servants removing "the Waldstädten furniture" and replacing it "with two small gilded chairs, center, quite close together. Others again surreptitiously bring in the old dressing-gown and shawl which Salieri discarded before Scene Three, placing them on the fortepiano" (48-9).

Considering that **Amadeus** represents events which took place more than 200 years ago, costumes are very important for the creation of atmosphere and for characterization, and the author makes it clear: "Costumes and objects were sumptuously of the period, and should always be so wherever the play is produced" ("Notes" 5). Although the scenery is only suggestive, dresses are realistic, as shown in the reference, in the first scene, to "the silhouettes of men and women dressed in the top hats and skirts of the early nineteenth century—Citizens of Vienna, all crowded together in the Light Box, and uttering their scandal" (9). Mozart's and Constanze's poverty, Salieri's success, and Mozart's vertiginous decadence are conveyed by the use of different wigs. Masks are suggested at the end of the play, when Salieri incarnates the figure of Death of Mozart's nightmares, the figure who comes "cloaked in grey" with no face, just "grey—like a mask" (82).[115] There is an important scene in which Mozart unmasks the figure and Salieri reveals himself, confessing his crime; but Mozart seems to be unconscious of Salieri's real identity (96).

Lighting is also very sophisticated in the play. Besides indicating changes of time and place through light changes, light helps to create the atmosphere of luxury at court, the dream-like climate of the gloomy scenes, and the darkness of the most tense moments, enhancing the impact of the set, a rectangle whose "surface shifted beguilingly under various lights played upon it, to show gunmetal grey, or azure, or emerald green, and reflect the actors standing upon it" (Author's Notes 5). Light also helps to focus on the actors.

In some scenes the intensity of the light is great, in others desolation is conveyed by dim light. There is a moment in which the light is focused on the audience, and with great intensity: "The light on the audience reaches its maximum. It stays like this during all the following" (15). It is at the beginning of the play, when Salieri invokes the audience as "Ghosts of the Future! Shades of Time to come!" (14-5). The audience is denied the safety of shadow and has to stand

[115] "There is also the evolution of Shaffer's use of masks from **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** to **Equus** to **Amadeus**. In the first, the masks are part of the spectacle of Peru. In the second, the actors who play the horses wear stylized masks. In **Amadeus**, the mask is an integral part of Salieri's plan to terrorize Mozart and drive him toward madness and death" (Klein 143).

the intolerable nude light, an experience that can be very uncomfortable. It clearly commands the audience's involvement, shaking it from its usual passivity (again Brecht's influence).[116]

Light and sound work together in the play to create a larger effect. Thus, for example, in scene 12, Salieri reads and is tormented by Mozart's music, which sounds in the background. The sound grows and Constanze's voice "falls away—it is suddenly clear and bright—then clearer and brighter" (54-5).Concomitantly, the light "grows bright: too bright: burning white, then scalding white!," while the sound becomes even louder, "filling the theatre," and "[t]his is by far the loudest sound the audience has yet heard" (55).

The sound devices used in the play are varied: the voices of the actors, the laments, the songs, the arias, the sound-track music, and the pianoforte parts, as well as giggles, whispers, and shouts. The play starts with rumors and whispers, in a crescendo: "SALIERI!" (10), and Salieri's first word in the play is a great cry: "MOZART!!!" followed by a meaningful silence (11). Besides, in the scene in which Salieri studies Mozart's manuscripts, "[m]usic sounds instantly, faintly, in the theatre, as his eyes fall on the first page. It is the opening of the **Twenty-ninth Symphony, in A Major**," but as Salieri "looks up from the manuscript at the audience: the music abruptly stops" (54). The gesture is repeated, but now with the **Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola** (54), and as he looks up again, "the music breaks off" (54). And other works by Mozart follow, throughout the play.

The play includes moments of choreography and dancing. Gesture is fundamental in Salieri's attempted suicide, in Mozart's collapse. An interesting aspect of gesture is the freezing of the actors, like when "Mozart freezes his movements and Salieri takes one easy step forward to make a fluent aside" (33). In the scene showing Mozart's argument with Constanze, the "young couple freeze" and Salieri yawns "and stretches as if waking up from a nap. He peers out of the wing-chair" (46). The couple unfreeze and Salieri starts speaking with them. The play finishes with Salieri's last act, his attempted suicide: "He cuts his throat, and falls backwards into the wheelchair" (103). He does not succeed even then. In fact, he "slowly rises and walks downstage: a lone figure in the darkness" to tell his last lines with his arms extended upwards "and outwards to embrace the assembled audience in a wide gesture of Benediction—finally folding his arms high across his own breast (104-5).

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[116] "Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, the strangemaking effect which ultimately boils down to emotions being aroused and then suddenly and also sometimes brutally inhibited, is an essentially tragi-comic device; so also is Beckett's mixture of comedy, farce and despair in **Waiting for Godot**" (Esslin 76).

[D] **Yonadab**

A world made of stones: this is the general atmosphere of Shaffer's **Yonadab**. This effect is caused by the scenery, the words used, the dialogues, the characters, and the society represented. Jerusalem in the Biblical times is seen under the perspective of Yonadab, David's despised nephew. The inspiration for the play comes from Dan Jacobson's fine novel **The Rape of Tamar.**[117] Shaffer first met the book in 1970, "and it produced in me an almost instant desire to animate the story through actors" (Preface vii). The protagonist of the play Yonadab criticizes the violence of that society, the weakness of David's house, and the intolerance and abuse of power by David's God. He tries to destroy King David's family and change Jerusalem. Yonadab is totally poisoned by envy and bitterness for being rejected by God and despised by men.[118] His situation of not being elected to be a king and living on the periphery of the court, overwhelmed by intense resentment, is in fact tragic. Besides, Yonadab says that he is living "in limbo for eternity" for being "intelligent" (87). David's God is in fact the Old Testament God, the God of the Law, a powerful, violent being, ready to punish any disobedience, and His power in the world is real and active. However, like Salieri in **Amadeus**, Yonadab is surprised by Yaveh's delay in interfering in the story (88). Indeed, Peter Shaffer portrays envy in a tragic context, like he did in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** and in **Amadeus.**[119] Yonadab is the "sensitive" and skeptical one, doubting God's real existence, presenting himself as "the creep" and God as the "savage" who has "no female consort," no sense of humor, indeed, a stone (89).

We can also say that this is a story of deceit: Amnon is deceived by Yonadab and deceives Tamar, Yonadab is deceived by Tamar and Yaveh, Absalom is deceived by Yonadab and David is deceived by all his sons. In spite of being deceived by Amnon, Tamar deceives Absalom, Amnon, Yonadab, and even her father. In fact it seems a great game about who is in control of the situation. Yonadab's intelligence contrasts with Amnon's naïve strong lust (92-3).

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[117] Many elements of Jacobson's novel are used by Shaffer: the ironical narrator, the biblical framework, and even some words and sentences. But Shaffer creates new emphasis: the symbolism of the curtains, the confrontation between Yonadab and Yaveh, and the strong presence of Tamar.

[118] "Yonadab is the most complex character in Peter Shaffer's dramatic repertoire. He is, perhaps, too complex, and therefore his motives are not always clear, and seem to contradict each other.... need for acceptance... envy... revenge... need for belief—worship.... win acceptance from his father" (Klein 176).

[119] Curiously, Steiner has said that "[t]ragedy is alien to the Judaic sense of the world" (Steiner 4). Shaffer seems to resist this assumption.

Tamar's intelligence contrasts with Absalom's power and beauty. Intelligence and deceit are conjoined in a story of vengeance and incest. The rape of Tamar by her own brother breaks many taboos in Israel (97). Vengeance moves Tamar and Yonadab. The play also shows Yonadab's incapacity to believe, and his surprise at the possibility of faith in an alternative God (100-1). Yonadab tempts Amnon to believe in the legend of a Kingdom of Perpetual Peace, and during the process he is caught in the verge of believing in the legend. Indeed, David's capacity for faith makes Yonadab wish to believe too. When King David is praying, Yonadab comments that "In those few minutes, lying on the dusty rugs, I tried with all my being to imagine myself David—a Priest King influencing the universe.... Oh, the wonder of that!" (109). In fact, the play deals with the Biblical myth of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden refashioned in Amnon's dreams of being a godlike Prince possessing a godlike Princess and living in an eternal realm of love and gentleness (104). A parallel with the Christian narrative can be observed in the scene in which Amnon, depressed, wishes to be watched by Yonadab, like Christ in the Garden of Getsemany, and Yonadab falls asleep (111).

The element of *mimesis* is complex in the play, for the author explores a Biblical story, full of mythological features, addressing a contemporary audience. There are many references to historical and cultural aspects of the Jewish history and culture: religious traditions and rituals, costumes worn at the time, verbal expressions, facts of their history, and the references to King David and his royal family. In fact, names of historical figures are alluded to in the play, like Samson, King David, his children Amnon, Absalom, Tamar, Adonijah, Ithream, Chileab, Shobab, Ibhar, and David's nephew Yonadab, as well as names of places and cities, like Jerusalem and Ba'al Hazoor, and monuments like the towers and walls of Jerusalem. And the use of biblical expressions creates an atmosphere of distant times, like when Tamar is praying, for example, or when David is praying or speaking solemnly, sometimes quoting the Bible in Hebrew, making the scene more convincing, establishing the historical context, and providing a certain distance. *Mimesis* is also evident in the elements of the scenery: the cushions and curtains are more or less realistic, conveying Amnon's room. Besides, the references to dreams also blur the distinction between reality and fiction. Yonadab describes Tamar's walk by the streets of Jerusalem as an unreal scene: "I follow as if enclosed in one of my vivid dreams—watching her tiny figure, wound in its curtain like a mockery bride, moving in this fantastic certainty" (129).

An ancient world is recreated, yet the *mimesis* evident in the play does not imply a total and perfect copy of the past, but a certain reflection about it, so that a necessary distance is kept

and an attitude about the facts and values is proposed. Yonadab makes clear that the play represents more than the Biblical narratives offer, suggesting and recreating events that only the narrator had witnessed. Thus, the play presents his version of what happened in Jerusalem at that time.[120] Some incidents are distorted according to Yonadab's interest, creating an atmosphere of intrigue and gossip, such as Amnon's belief in the fable of the Kingdom of Perpetual Peace and Tamar's involvement in the death of Amnon, as well as her plan of seducing Absalom. Fiction and history mingle and sometimes they are indistinguishable. Besides, Yonadab creates and preserves a link with the audience, the contemporary man, providing a certain distance from and a point of contact with the story, something already done in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, **Equus**, and **Amadeus**.

The action of the play is unified according to Yonadab's perspective, his point of view, centered on his involvement in the rape of Tamar, his tentative of touching the family of David. It displays proportion, magnitude, having an impressive beginning, a clear twofold division (before and after Tamar's rape), and a very strong end. The play starts with a prologue in which Yonadab presents the main conflicts and characters, and conveys the prevalent atmosphere. The first part includes Yonadab's plans and vengeance, while the second part presents Tamar's plans and vengeance. Like in the other plays by Shaffer, there is a narrator who reports and introduces flashback scenes. There are also many foreshadowings, dreams and plans, promises and menaces. The climax of the play can be identified in Amnon's death by Tamar's scheme, and Yonadab's defeat as well as his recognition of it. At the very end, there is a moment of final reconciliation, in which Yonadab speaks his last words and adapts himself to his new situation as a defeated man.

The action of the play follows the principle of cause and consequence, respecting the logic of the incidents and their relationship, although of course some facts are hidden from the audience and revealed only at the end by Tamar herself. The action is totally plausible, and finishes in what is necessary, although surprising at the same time, since the fragile raped woman becomes the strongest character in the play. In addition, the action includes the elements of reversal of fortune and recognition experienced by Yonadab just at the moment when he thinks

[120] Aristotle's conception of mimesis is clarified by his distinction between history and poetry, and Shaffer seems to be well aware of it: "... the historian speaks of what has happened, the poet of the kind of thing that can happen. Hence also poetry is a more philosophical and serious business than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars" (Aristotle **Poetics** 32-3).

he is going to taste victory. It presents a complex (double) plot: Yonadab is doomed, Tamar is the great winner.

Yonadab does not fit in the pattern of the good-natured hero, the well-intentioned character who makes a mistake. Indeed, he intends to destroy David's family out of envy, bitterness and hatred. Besides, he is also revealed as a mediocre, selfish, coward and cynical man.[121] His *hamartia* is connected to his participation in Tamar's rape, a clear immoral action, a crime. However, he is also a sensitive man, begging for mercy and refusing the use of violence, revealing gentleness, sensibility, intelligence, a critical sense of reality, and signs of humanity in his personality. He wishes a less intolerant society, less violent, less hypocritical, less insensitive. In addition, Yonadab is an ambiguous man, for his skepticism is in crisis, and for an instant he becomes a believer. He is inconsistent, incarnating the incongruities of the modern man, who wants to get rid of his own condition, tradition, and religious misjudgments, and wishes an alternative life-style.

The sign of *hybris* in Yonadad is evident because he openly tries to compete with God and to dethrone him as the unique effective authority. By doing so, he evinces Yaveh's presumption of power and exclusiveness, his intolerance, his lack of sense of humor, and his isolation as a male solitary divine entity. Yonadab's *hybris* is also related to an excess of intelligence and sensibility, of being too smart politically for that society composed of blindly faithful servants of monarchy and monotheism. Indeed, he wants a freer society, a gentler world, a kinder religion; and this unbalanced desire makes him believe in his own made up myths of a kingdom of peace.

Besides, Yonadab plays constantly with blasphemy, trespassing God's most emphatic and fundamental rules. In an aside, Yonadab declares his hatred against David, his family, and his God: "Ruin! Ruin to the House of David! And I the ruiner! Yonadab the family joke—Lord over them all! Lord over Him too above—*Yaveh the Non-God!* Hadn't I proved that now up to the hilt? If He lived I'd have been dead beyond anyone's doubt" (131). The same fight against God can be seen in **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, **Amadeus**, and **Equus**. Yonadab is anxious for God's answer. As a consequence of Yonadab's *hybris*, the punishment of God, his rage, although delayed a lot, finally comes through the hands of Tamar. In a way, the play seems to allude to the biblical narrative of the temptation of Adam and Eve, in which knowledge, lust, and pride are involved.

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[121] Von Szelisk observes that the heroes in modern tragedies are generally "limited, antiheroic, unsuccessful, and low-rancked. All pessimistic protagonists are losers" (von Szeliski 95).

The notion of *hamartia* in the play does not seem to confirm Aristotle's principles, since Yonadab's error is not a minor one. Although his participation is indirect, his involvement is explicit and total, for he collaborates in a political, religious and moral mischief: the destruction of King David's family, offending God, and menacing society. It is not a mere mistake. In fact, he wants historical restoration and social rehabilitation by the destruction of David's dynasty. His participation in Amnon's violence against Tamar and his premeditated manipulation of the events and the individuals convey the malevolence of his character and confirm David's and Tamar's suspicions about him. Besides, the consequences of his acts are serious, he suffers the punishment of his crime, he is cursed by the King. But the most terrible price he has to pay is the corrosive, permanent experience of despair.[122] Considering that he makes a free decision, he is totally responsible for the act. His cold cynicism and the irony of his commentaries, however, convey that he is not concerned with that. His entire life is seen under the perspective of the execution of and punishment for his *hamartia*.

There is a moment of *anagnorisis* in the play, one of its strongest elements maybe, when Yonadab finally realises that things are going bad for him and Tamar is in control of the situation, that his dreams of freedom and gentleness are not possible, that David's God and house are even stronger, and his faith is a mere illusion. He learns about the failure of his plans, about God's intervention through Tamar, and his condition as an eternally despised person in the Kingdom of Judah. This happens when Tamar explains how she executed her plans and the devices she used to manipulate the situation. Just when Yonadab is near the fulfillment of his most valued plans, he becomes suddenly aware of the reversal of his fortune and this awareness triggers an inner change, from a light hope to total despair. Indeed, it is a knowledge without redemption, the learning of disillusionment.

The element of *peripety*, the reversal of Yonadab's fortune, has occurred before the beginning of the play, since the Narrator is already ruined when he starts speaking, and the events of the past are performed before the audience. But Yonadab reports on the moment of his fall. It comes after a trance of faith, when his plans seemed to work out: "The land is shining! Every Sign is right! It is true—I *am* an Instrument! I have condemned Kings and brought them low [the prophet Jeremiah, Isaiah]. I have beheld Amnon rebuked! Absalom reformed! Tamar reborn!

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[122] In this sense, Shaffer seems to confirm Steiner's notion that "[r]eal tragedy can occur only where the tormented soul believes that there is no time left for God's forgiveness" (Steiner 332).

May not Yonadab be reborn also?" (173). In fact, after his access of faith, his suspension of disbelief, peripety comes. Like Oedipus, Yonadab the wise was totally blind and is going to suffer a curse. What is interesting, from the perspective of Aristotles's principles, is that the events related to Yonadab's *peripety* coincide with his *anagnorisis*.

Pathos in the play can be clearly seen in the rape of Tamar, the death of Amnon, the violent aggression against Yonadab, the fatherly suffering of King David. Soon as the play begins there is a violent scene in which four men are stoned until death by a priest (88). But violence is not realistically enacted but mimed. The rape of Tamar is also styllzed, though performed on the stage. The death of Absalom, although very important in the story, is only commented by the Narrator. The violence of these scenes contrasts with the gentleness required by Yonadab and reveals the human suffering in its intensity and crudity. Apparently, only Tamar's suffering is innocent and thus pathetic.

Pity and fear are triggered by several scenes in the play. Tamar's rape seems to be one of the most intense scenes in which she becomes the victim of Amnon's lust and Yonadab's trickery, although at the beginning of the play she performs a very sensuous dance before her brothers and provokes them, mainly Amnon, what suggests that her innocence cannot be confounded with naïveté. The scene of her rape suggests terror and pity. And when she walks along the streets of Jerusalem, just after the rape, wearing as sole mantle the curtains of Amnon's bedroom, the audience can pity her deep suffering, identifying with her pain and tears, while Yonadab's lack of pity makes the scene even more pitiful (130). Yonadab's feeling of rejection, his social disfavor, may be seen as pitiable and fearful, something with which the audience can identify. In a certain way, he is the paradigm of the modern man, living in a violent society, being rejected as mediocre, craving for social restoration and for the restitution of his dignity.

Fear is present in the possibility of being dominated by a passion that disturbs the mind, like the one that afflicted Amnon, and like the obsession that moved Yonadab. The play also conveys the fear of being enchanted by power, fame, and glory, like in the case of Absalom who rebelled against his father, killing his brother and breaking the family ties, or like in Yonadab's envious dream of social change and rehabilitation. The intolerance and the fanaticism shown by Tamar are also fearful, from the perspective of the audience. Besides, the audience can identify with David and fear the weakness of spoiling children, The audience can still fear the idealism, dreams and disillusionment of Yonadab's life, leading him to despair, as well as his pride and arrogance transformed into insolence, leading him to insanity.

The experience of *catharsis* provided by the play is related to the several negative emotions and behaviors presented on the stage, like selfishness, intolerance, envy, rage, lust, and cynicism. To the audience is offered the opportunity of experiencing *catharsis* as cleansing of those feelings as well as of rationalism and even irrationality, thus overcoming the poisonous effects of such experiences. Besides, violent aspects of the ancient and modern cultures and the influence of religion on those aspects are also targeted by the play: intolerance, repression, adoration of fame, beauty, mysticism, religious dogmas, and political power. Yonadab utters a cry of protest against God, against his anointed King (David), against the society represented by the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Yonadab's success as well as his failure is partial, what makes his criticism of the prevailing values of that world more eloquent and convincing. His malignity is punished, as well as his ambition, his blasphemies, his defiance of the established order. Besides, Tamar's suffering is redeemed; she is seen first as a martyr and then as a consecrated redeemer herself, champion of the moral cleansing of the nation. In a certain way, she acts as a priest, coordinating the ritual of purification. In fact, Yonadab seems to be the scapegoat of the story, suspected and condemned by the King and his family.

According to the play, life has a meaning, but a pessimistic one: men are mediocre, God is sovereign and intolerant, religion is a cover for repression, violence, and intolerance. The answer for Yonadab's pretensions of being the articulator of a new world is *no*. Indeed, frustration is something which recurs in Yonadab's experience. This becomes evident when Amnon rapes Tamar, for example, and Yonadab wishes to watch the scene but is impeded by the curtains at the very moment. Ecstasy and the interruption of ecstasy create a very complex experience of *catharsis*, conveying that life is in a way incomplete, insatiable.

Yonadab poisons and provides the audience with the antidote for the feeling of being rejected by God and left out of the mainstream. He is the focus of a moral, historical judgement due to his participation in the rape of Tamar. At same time, his crime is his wish of a different society, less violent and less intolerant. In this case, he suffers vicariously, providing the audience with the experience of *catharsis*. In the conflict between emotion and reason, dream and reality, he becomes the great laboratory, the manipulator and the victim, the subject and the object of strong emotions. Thus, the play offers a better understanding of life in the past and in the present time. It illumimnates the tensions and conflicts of the modern individual, the condition of being caught in the net of existential emptiness, the impotence to break the long chain of events that encompasses history. His view of the world presents a critical understanding of reality, an

alternative to the official conservative discourse of David and Tamar, in fact, the Bible. The audience is invited to think about it and arrive at a conclusion, adhering or not to Yonadab's skeptical portrayal of reality.

Language in the play is rich, varied, and complex, including colloquial language, the biblical style, the formal discourse, songs and prayers, sometimes conveying subtle irony, sometimes displaying harshness, arriving at the limits of direct verbal offense and vulgarity, as when Amnon, just after the rape, calls Tamar a "Witch-whore" (128). The imitation of the biblical style, like in David's and Tamar's prayers or in Yonadab's commentaries, is visible even in the use of Hebrew words in the names of the characters, tribes, cities, villages, and versicles from the Torah: "*Voolamnown rayah vooshomov Yonadab.* And Amnon had a friend whose name was Yonadab. *V'Yonadab eese hochom m'owd.* And Yonadab was a very subtle man" (87). Yonadab speaks in Hebrew, introducing himself and ironically explaining that *subtle* is "the usual adjective used in my tribe for anyone of intelligence. Not often employed, as a result. I am quoting the Authorized Version of your Bible, Second Book of Samuel, Chapter Thirteen" (87). The names have important meanings: Yonadab means, ironically, "Yaveh is merciful"; David means beloved; Amnon means "faithful"; Absalom means "my father is peace"; and Jerusalem means "the foundation of peace."

Since Yonadab makes a bridge between the past time of the actors and the present time of the audience, he mingles many modern expressions and the biblical style: "The Bible-readers amongst you no doubt assume that everyone in ancient Israel was a ramping, stamping Behever. Not true. That's propaganda" (89). His preference for informal language and his corrosive sense of humor overstep the limits of blasphemy: "Indigestion was a permanent condition one thousand years B.C. (*He steps on the inner stage.*) Incidentally, 'C'—being descended from David—is also one of *my* family connections" (89). The "C" in question is Christ. In contrast, David's language is much more formal: "Blessed art Thou, King of the Universe, who hast given us bread from the earth" (90).

Shaffer creates elaborate structured dialogues interweaved with asides and pauses, mixing modern and ancient theatre conventions, keeping distance from realism, and achieving a more poetic atmosphere. Dialogues reveal several complex relations and important tensions in the play, as well as the encounter of forces and the game of seduction. As important as dialogue is the use of the aside, through which Yonadab's attitudes become more evident as well as his complicity. He is clearly the most articulate character in the play, using the words with intelligence and

sensibility, expressing all his doubts and crises, fears and wishes, conveying his political and religious attitude and affecting the other characters. Indeed his great ability as manipulator is shown in his careful use of the spoken word and control of dialogue. Dialogues also help to individualize and develop each character of the play, conveying their articulatory capacity, their ignorance, and their involvement in the action of the play. Besides, dialogues establish social relations in the play, separating servants and lords, princes and citizens, winners and losers.

Pause is a very important component of the dialogues, creating and enhancing tension and conveying emotion. Some parts of the dialogue are stylized, as when Yonadab and Amnon share information about the Kingdom of Perpetual Peace, like in a recitation:

> Amnon: Ruled over by a young King and a Queen.
> Yonadab: Deep in love.
> Amnon: And both immortal. (99)

In fact, Yonadab creates a certain expectation about the tale when he hesitates: "It's hard. I fear to speak of it... But it just could be possible" (99). Silence is eloquent in Shaffer.

Parallel dialogues are very well used by Shaffer. In the scene in which Amnon calls Tamar in a dream, Yonadab addresses the audience, commenting:

> Amnon: Tamar! Tamar! Come!
> Yonadab: (*To audience*): All that week I sat with my visions,
> and he with his.
> Amnon: Appear to me now—and stay!
> Yonadab: (*To audience*) Mine were more disgusting, I admit.
> Tamar the immemorial daddy's girl, wriggling on her back.
> Amnon: (*Putting on a serious voice*) Where art Thou? Speak
> within me!... (102-3)

Characterization in the play is also provided by the relationships developed by the characters. Yonadab, for example, reveals the plurality of his personality by his relationship with Amnon, David, Absalom, and Tamar. In his ambiguous relationship with Amnon, Yonadab is revealed as a manipulator and plotter, while Amnon is seen as a blind, lustful, obsessed man. In his relationship with King David, Yonadab's bitter criticism of power, his ambiguous submission, and his condition as a despised man become evident. The relation between Yonadab and Absalom is also important to reveal Yonadab's intelligent change of behavior, his careful use of words, his fear, his submission and false acceptance and authority. It also evinces Absalom's arrogance, intolerance, and thirst for power. To the audience, Yonadab frankly reveals his skepticism, his irony, and his spiritual crisis, in a context of confession and advice. Yet, it is before Tamar that his weaknesses become more visible and poignant.

In fact, all the characters are functional in the play, enhancing the minor and major conflicts and polarizing tension. Along with the most well developed characters, the play presents many types: the spoiling father, the ambitious son, the lustful brother, and the Servants. Yonadab and Tamar are, in fact, the most complex characters in the play, showing a certain change in their condition, a certain depth and personal view of reality. Tamar changes from naïveté to maturity, while her intolerance, cruelty, bitterness, and spirit of vengeance become even stronger. Yonadab avoids resisting her directly, and reserves his criticism to the audience only. Shaffer refers to Yonadab as a "figure of a cynic lured for a moment into the possibility of Belief: an anguished figure forever caught between the impossibility of religious credo and the equal impossibility of perpetual incredulity" (vii).

Yonadab defines his own society by its violence: "We were smiters! We smote the whole world in the name of our God of Commandment. Ammonites, Caanites, Jebusites, Amalekites, Hivites, Hittites, Perizites, Moabites—all the Ites in fact whom you now cannot tell apart because we smote them so completely" (88). The presence of God surrounds the world of the play and haunts Yonadab's soul. This exclusive God is characterized by violence. In fact, He is Yonadab's most violent opponent. Yonadab is "the Sensitive" while Yaveh is "the Savage" (89). Like in **Amadeus**, there is a fight between a man and God: "Let Him defend Himself! Prove that He exists, *finally*! *Let Him stop me* if He is there—Yaveh the Prohibitor!" (98).

In a rage, David defines Yonadab as "The Man of Eyes" (110), a reference to his spying vigilance, and a suggestion of his voyeuristic attitude towards life. At that night, Amnon asks Yonadab to watch over him, confirming Yonadab's voyeuristic tendencies. But when Yonadab asks Amnon to let him see the sexual intercourse between him and Tamar— "I beg you let me be a witness. To share—as common men can only share—in the glory of royal ones" (114)—, he is refused. However, Yonadab improvises a plan and enters Amnon's ante-chamber, and watches their intercourse (119). Yonadab is very ironic, calling himself "your Special Correspondent" (119). But at the crucial moment, when the curtains of the bedroom are pulled down of his face, obstructing the vision and interrupting his voyeuristic experience, Yonadab explodes in indignation and irony, smiling at the ridiculous scene: "What had he to do with curtains? A bull with bed curtains? [....] (*Increasingly furious*) Damn!...Damn! Damn! Damn! Damnation! [....] It was like some fantastic joke against me!" (126). After the rape, while Tamar walks along the streets, Yonadab confirms his voyeurism by following her.

The structure of the play includes a good exposition scene in which place, time, atmosphere, and the scheme of probability are established. The structure of the play keeps some similarities with **Amadeus**: the narrator is a figure coming from the past, addressing the contemporary audience, presenting a story of revenge, envy, of being chosen or rejected by God, elected or despised. The point of attack is placed late in the play; thus Yonadab, the reporter, speaks about incidents already occurred, related to his ruin and to the ruin of David's family. Tamar had already been raped, Amnon had already been killed, and Absalom was already dead. The tone is ironic and critical. After the exposition, the tensions in the family of the King become evident and complicate the plot: the inner conflict lived by Amnon, the provocative behavior of Tamar, the complacence of David. As the play moves on, the influence and manipulation of Yonadab over Amnon becomes clear, as well as Amnon's obsession with Tamar. The climax of the first Act involves the rape of Tamar and its consequences. After this point and in a crescendo throughout the second Act, the influence and the presence of Tamar as a manipulator becomes more evident.

The coherence of the structure is evident; all the parts are interlinked and there is a perfect balance between the two Acts of the play, as if they reflect each other, a unity in which the character of Tamar changes into a more influent and powerful position, while Yonadab becomes more conscious of his rejection and defeat. Besides, the incidents of the play respect the principle of causality and consequence, supplying a reason for each action, avoiding any illogical, unexpected, or unprepared scene. Although there are many references to legends, rehgious beliefs, demons and spirits, all the incidents have a logical explanation. The extraordinary thing is that, considering the many allusions to God, nothing supernatural really happens. What happens is human and performed by human beings, although Yonadab hesitates and for a moment believes in the possibility of the supernatural invading the natural. All the mysteries are explained at the end by Tamar.

There are many conflicts in the play, developed mainly by language, although the author also appeals to many visual and aural artifices, enhancing what is conveyed through the dialogues. The major conflict is related to Yonadab's opposition to King David and his family, and involves indeed Yonadab and Yaveh in a spiritual battle.[123] Tamar becomes first a victim of

[123] In Shaffer's first plays "compelling characters are brought into conflict over significant issues. In every play Peter Shaffer has written, a clear-cut antagonism between characters provides a centrepoint of conflict to assure that dramatic tension never lags" (Gianakaris 16).

Yonadab's vengeance and then an instrument of the vengeance of Yaveh, restoring the order and purity of the nation. Since the beginning of the play, Yonadab accuses the God of Israel of being the great originator of that violent and intolerant society. The other minor conflicts involve Amnon's rape of Tamar, her revenge on Amnon, Absalom's challenge of David's authority, Absalom's beauty in contrast with Amnon's brutality, the family of King David in suspicion against Yonadab, each conflict creating a considerable amount of tension. Although the play restores and preserves many elements of the Greek tragedy, like the use of dance, song, choreography, and all the visual and aural crafts, the ancient structure based on the Chorus is not imitated. Shaffer prefers other esthetical solutions, like the use of flashbacks, the narrator, and the asides, a formula used in the four plays analyzed. Although the events of the play are performed as flashbacks, the action follows the chronological order. The climax of the play can be identified in Yonadab's personal reversal of fortune and immediate recognition, when he is cheated by Tamar and his illusions of an alternative kingdom are suddenly cut off.

Violence is performed on the stage, like the scene of Amnon's death, apparently breaking an important principle of the classical tragedy according to which the explicit display of violence does not add to the tragic effect. Yet, Shaffer seems to compromise with it, since Amnon remains under the carpet and only his blood appears. For tragedy, what matters is the confirmation of the human dignity as exemplified in the attitude of the hero, not what he suffers but how he reacts to suffering. In that sense, Amnon's suffering is not tragic but pathetic, and that is in keeping with his unheroic attributes. Tamar's suffering is more tragic, because of her reaction and recovery. But Yonadab's suffering is much more tragic because, even when defeated and cursed, he resists and faces opposition, which seems to confirm his role as protagonist.

Tension is the result of several minor conflicts connected to the major one, emanated from the structure of the play, and from the surprise of unexpected, although prepared, scenes. According to Yonadab, the atmosphere of Jerusalem is one of continuous terror. He considers himself a victim of this system of violence, reacting in terms of panic and resistance. The incidents of the play are fecund generators of tension: rape, murder, plotting, schemes of vengeance. In Act I tension is centered on the rape of Tamar as part of Yonadab's scheme of vengeance; in Act II it is focused on Tamar's vengeance on Amnon, Absalom and Yonadab. As Yonadab comes near to the possibility of success and to the plausibility of the Kingdom of Perpetual Peace, tension becomes greater. The psychological tension is more intense in Yonadab, since he experiences greater spiritual and relational conflicts.

In addition to the major moments of tension, there are minor conflicts: Tamar's apparent refusal to sing and dance in the first scene, her refusal to visit and cook for Amnon, Yonadab's asking for being a witness of Amnon's encounter with Tamar and so on. David's authoritarian presence is a source of tension. His preference for Absalom also brings some sort of tension among his brothers. Sometimes tension is enhanced by light and sound effects (111). Sometimes tension is related to the expectation of events to happen, like for example the interference from God. Yonadab undergoes the same anguish lived by Salieri in **Amadeus**: "Yaveh must show His hand now and stop it! How far would He let it go?—and what would His punishment be?" (111).

Dreams are very important in the play, as they were in the biblical times. Amnon has dreams, Yonadab dreams, Absalom dreams, Tamar affirms to dream also. These dreams manifest the most intimate wishes and fears of the characters, as well as foreshadowing important scenes.[124] Absalom, for example, has a dream in which he watches Amnon raping Tamar: "I can't move to help you. I just have to watch. I see him pushing you, and shouting 'Get out!' I'm shouting too! 'Come to me! Come to me! I'll take you in. I'll take you in for ever!' But you can't hear me!... I wake up shouting it" (159). It is a voyeuristic nightmare.

The play develops many important themes, but envy seems to be one of the most evident. Yonadab envies David's social recognition, integral piety, and divine preference; Absalom envies his father's power; Amnon envies Absalom's prestige. The other important theme is related to Yonadab's open challenge of Yaveh's sovereignty, the individual questioning God in a spiritual confrontation. The play shows Yonadab's incredulity in relation to religion in Israel and his naïve belief in the legend of the Kingdom of Perpetual Peace. He faces opposition and resists political and spiritual authority. Thus religion seems to be one of the major themes of the play. The nature of religious experience is discussed as well as two different visions of God and faith, implying two different visions of the world. Aiming at undermining Amnon's beliefs and criticize society, for example, Yonadab criticizes Yaveh as a God who "shares His divinity with no one, not even a wife. But by the Nile it is all different! There, if you are a true prince, you are immortal. Immortality is your birth-right" (99). Like Salieri in **Amadeus**, Yonadab is surprised with the power of his suggestions: "Who would believe this? A trickle of half-digested mysticism started by me had become in him a river of drivel!" (104). Yonadab clearly mocks Amnon's credulity. In

[124] Carlinda Nuñez comments on the importance of dreams for the Greeks: "Muito antes da teoria freudiana sobre os sonhos, a representação dramatúrgica dos mitos gregos já os naturalizara e aos seus congêneres (oráculos, adivinhações, aparições espectrais, alucinações, êxtases) como emissários de sinais divinos e advertências sobre desejos cujo sentido se encontrava selado e/ou perdido" (59).

fact Amnon and Yonadab seem to share a wish of surpassing human limitations, going beyond Time and despair (104). Before time and death, existence becomes a problem. The same preoccupation with the fragility of human life is also seen in many Greek tragedies, yet there is still the obstinate affirmation of the dignity of human existence, celebrated in the worthy attitude of the hero.

The characters in the play, mainly David, Tamar, Amnon, and Yonadab, live under and centered on God. The atmosphere of the play is religious. Thus David's life is marked by the presence of a God who is ready to punish, terrorizing him with a sense of guilt. David is full of guilt before God and before his children, afflicted because of his sins. But Yonadab envies David's passionate devotion towards his God. He is fascinated by King David in prayer:

> In those few minutes, lying on the dusty rugs, I tried with all my being to imagine myself David—a Priest King influencing the universe. What must it be like to launch a massive appeal to the Unknown? To send out to It what also must be unknow to me—I mean my very *Self*: the Self of Myself without reservation? To let that be known by the vaster Unknown, and then returned to me with such tremendous force that I *can* know it—in the storming of my blood. Unknowable God confirmed as surely as the existence of myself! *Oh*, the wonder of that! To be Its entire resounding instrument! Not myself—yet never more myself! (109)

Yonadab is unable of such a surrender.

Religion is present even in Yonadab's commentary on the rape of Tamar, in a long narrative aside. The rape is described as a religious act in which Tamar is the sacrificial offering and Amnon is the priest dealing "with a sacred scroll," with reverence and prayer (126). Thus religion is expressed in sexual terms, revealing an existential torment: the fear of despair and emptiness. Yonadab breaks the ambiguous reverence of the description with an ironic remark: "In other words—it was just another fuck!" (128). The fancy of Amnon's lust ends in deception. In fact, Yonadab treats the existential, metaphysical, and political conflicts of the human being. He craves for dignity, for understanding life, for a more tolerant society, and plays with the human condition, its insignificance.

The scenery of the first production, in 1985, directed by Peter Hall, was under the responsibility of John Bury, and included "a vast, translucent pavilion covered with Hebrew writing from the Book of Samuel, which narrated the story even as at times it shadowed and slid over the performers—was finely original, but it was all to no avail" (viii). At the time, the work was not completed. According to the stage directions of the final version, the scenery includes an

outer and an inner stage. After the first words by Yonadab, King David is seen "sitting on his throne on the inner stage" (88). As two priests come and stone in mime four kneeling men, their bodies fall forward and remain on the outer stage" (88-9). In the scene of the dinner two servants enter bringing bowls before the brothers and David; it is a "communal bowl" (90). After that, the servants remain on the stage in "hieratic poses suggestive of Egyptian god-figures: one male, one female" (90). They compose with the scenery.

In general, the scenery conveys a sense of balance, economy, and beauty. It is changed during the scenes either by some machinery, some ropes and curtains, or by characters with no speech like the Helpers, who play various characters, something also used in **Equus** and **Amadeus**. The house of Amnon is suggested by a canopy that "falls from above, edged with a fringe of opaque white curtains, rolled up tightly" in the inner stage (96). His lust and personality is conveyed by the scenery, the way his bedroom is decorated, with all the curtains and vases. Curtains would be fundamental again in the scene in which Yonadab is watching the rape and his vision is suddenly blocked. Curtains indeed have many purposes; they decorate, divide the space, blur Yonadab's vision in important scenes, serve as hiding places or suggest an atmosphere. After Tamar's walk, Absalom's tower hangs above the inner stage. The tower is used several times in the play. In the scene of Tamar's wandering through the streets of Jerusalem, there is a specific space on the outer stage representing the "street."

Dream and reality are placed simultaneously on the stage, occupying the inner and outer stage—"a stage within a stage" (83)—, thus creating a very subtle notion of *mimesis*. Usually, the dream scenes are indicated by stylized slow motions and a by certain sound effect. During the scene in which Amnon pretends to be sick, there is a sudden change of scenery: "The other helpers return bearing and strewing a great pile of coloured cushions, which they make up ceremoniously into a bed. The canopy above descends closer, to frame it" (106). In the scene of the killing of Amnon in Ba'al Hazoor, the scenery is also changed by four helpers who "spread on the inner stage a huge woollen rug, emblazoned with the Star of David" (169). Absalom's guards have spears with which they kill Amnon. Then "[a] great stain of blood appears in the centre of the Star of David. Absalom and Tamar embrace in triumph. Darkness swallows the inner stage. The rug is removed from it. Great cries fill the theatre: 'Slain! Slain! Slaughtered! Slaughtered!'" (170).

The costumes used in the play fit the pattern of the scenery and complete the requirements for the creation of the atmosphere, conveying a sense of time and place. They evoke the biblical

times, when David was the King of Israel. They indicate social rank, sensuality, authority, beauty, decadence and humiliation, and even insanity. They are very realistic and characteristic of the old times, more realistic than language sometimes and definitely much more realistic than the scenery itself. Yonadab, the narrator, appears as "a man in early middle age wearing the robes of his tribe" (87). When King David visits Amnon, he enters the stage with urgency, "holding a prayer shawl and the Saniph—the Royal Turban, on the front of which is a gold flower engraved in Hebrew with the phrase 'Consecrated to Yaveh'" (107). Preparing for the moment of receiving and seducing Tamar, Amnon wears raiment of pure white (113). Tamar appears veiled on a litter, according to the custom of the time (115). According to the stage direction, "Tamar is exquisitely made up" (116). In the scene of the rape, the absence of costumes becomes relevant, as Amnon takes out his white robe and stands naked, with his back to the audience (126). In the sequence, Tamar also appears naked and, after the rape, she runs away covered with a curtain (128). Dressed thus, she walks along the streets of Jerusalem (129).

In terms of spectacle the play is very creative.[125] Since it moves beyond the historical interest, the enactment includes some stylized physical movements, slow motions, freezing, as when Amnon rapes Tamar and draws the letters of a strange alphabet, with the shadows of his body. The realism of the scene is broken by the movements of the actors and by Yonadab's excited, ironical commentary. Physical movement is another important element of the play as spectacle, including the dancing parts, the walking scenes, the torture of Yonadab, the rape of Tamar, the love scene between Absalom and Tamar, the feast in which Amnon is killed, and the dream scenes.[126] The gestures are diverse in the play—fights, kisses, prayers, sexual relationships, Yonadab hidden behind the curtains being punished by Absalom, or King David in prayer. The entrance of the naked body of Amnon, dead and carried by the guards has a great significance in the play (178).

The authority of King David is confirmed by gestures: "David rises. All prostrate themselves, including Yonadab" (90). Blessing the food, David extends his hand over it. In a gesture that shows intimacy and provocation David takes Amnon's face "in his hand," asking for the reason of his disturbance (92). Later on, David handles the hair of Absalom and praises its

[125] Though dealing with a rape, decorum (Brockett, Dawson) demands a certain restriction since it refers to a biblical episode linked with spiritual matters. As usual, Shaffer is fantastic in spectacle. Again, raw naturalism gives place to metaphor.

[126] Ezra Pound says: "the medium of drama is not words, but persons moving about on a stage using words" (*apud* Barnet et al. 3).

beauty (94). His preference for Absalom becomes evident. David perceives the jealousy of Amnon and tries to console him imitating a bull stamping the ground with "horns and charging motions" and shouting: "Choo-choo!...Ha!...Haaa!" (94). When David visits Amnon he "prods jovially at the genitals of the sick man and sweeps out" (110). David's adoration for his sons and for Tamar is made visible by his gestures, like when he raises the veil of Tamar (95).

Slow motion is used in Yonadab's dream of Absalom, who appears with four guards menacingly, "in terrible slow motion the figures perform the Prince's bidding—miming the action described by Yonadab, although without actually picking him up physically" (112). The gestures are commented by Yonadab in an aside: "a dizziness overcame me. I slipped down into a horrible dream. I saw Absalom wild-eyed, with a sword of judgment in his hand pointing straight at me!...." (112). The next important scene in terms of physical movement is Tamar's exit from Amnon's house and walking by the streets wearing only a curtain round her body (128). Tamar walks in slow motion and silently mimes screaming (129). The stylized movement and the suggestion of the action are enough to convey the idea of a nightmare, enhancing tension. When Tamar is going to scream, she "mimes scooping up earth from the ground," then she "kneels" and "mimes pouring dust on her head" (130).

Freezing of gesture is also used in the play to focus attention on a specific character and also to enhance tension, like in the scene in which Absalom invites his father to the Feast of Tabernacles and his guards freeze as the staves bang and he salutes his father (93). As they freeze, Yonadab comes to comment on the situation, David's evasive behavior.

Lighting is another important component in the play, creating an atmosphere of dream, nightmare, eroticism, terror, and abandonment. It is also a very efficient form of focusing on a character like Yonadab, for example, on what he says and on his reactions to the circumstances around. Light is also very important to mark the change of scenes, the change of time and place. In **Yonadab**, lighting is always used in connection with sound effects, completing the aural experience with color, brightness, and depth. Evening, dawn, night, noon, dusk are all conveyed through light. When Yonadab appears on the stage for the first time, he is alone in the darkness. While he speaks, lights focus on King David, "sitting on his throne on the inner stage" (88). Besides, the scene of the execution of the four men, which illustrates the violence of David's authority, is marked by both sound and light effects: drums and horns sounds and light changes (88-9). Later, in the scene of the rape, music, sound devices, and light are arranged to create a total effect (127).

The sound effect is as well rich in the play, a complex intermingling of voices, songs, screams, soundtrack music, suggesting dream or reality, terror or pleasure. Shaffer makes clear in the presentation of the play that the "sound in general will be produced with great variety and virtuosity through speakers in the auditorium, greatly supplementing what is provided by the Helpers on stage" (84). Another sound characteristic of the play is produced by the banging of staves and applause (94), besides David's softly playing of the lyre and Tamar's softly singing of a song (96). As the music grows, Tamar dances, "crooning and ullulating as she flirts with her brothers" (96). Low chords are also used to mark the change of scenes. In the scene in which Tamar mimes that she is screaming in the streets of Jerusalem; sound is again very important: "Tamar throws back her head and opens her mouth: then shuts it" (129). When she finally can, she "gives a soft cry" that becomes louder and louder "until she stands up and yells: "AHHHHHHHHH!" (130). During the scene a low sound of gasping fills the theatre, and as she repeats it "the noise in the theatre grows in volume, and the Townspeople mime their shock and outrage. At the climax of this huge sound the sun appears and illumines behind her the inner stage" (131).

Chapter IV

Similarities and Differences between the Greek Plays under Analysis and Peter Shaffer's

There are many points of contact between Shaffer's plays and the Greek ones. In fact, one can see that Shaffer takes into consideration the achievements of the Greek theatre and uses some of its most important devices. He consciously and intentionally alludes to and recreates the Greek heritage, trying to recover the lost élan of the classic theatre. Even one of his most recent plays—**The Gift of the Gorgon** (1992), which was not selected for the present analysis—presents most explicit references to the Greek plays. Indeed, the same attempt at linkage with the Greeks is visible, in different proportions, in each of Shaffer's plays selected: **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**, **Equus**, **Amadeus**, and **Yonadab**. Sometimes the linkage is manifest in terms of similarities; sometimes it is expressed in terms of differences, that is, in Shaffer's preference for a different solution. Even the Greek playwrights followed different paths and chose peculiar forms of dramatic expression, according to their own preferences and principles.

In relation to language, it is possible to perceive a difference between Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Although they all write in verse, Aeschylus is richer in his use of poetry, creating many interesting and inspiring metaphors and images, while Euripides tends to be more rhetorical than poetical and to come closer to the colloquial form of speech. In this particular, Shaffer is closer to Euripides than to Aeschylus and Sophocles. Although Shaffer creates beautiful images and some of his characters utter remarkable soliloquies, he does not plunge into the poetical form.[127] In fact, Shaffer's language is more rhetorical, and reveals a preference for the colloquial.[128] Therefore, it reveals a preoccupation with form and argument, with the necessity of being convincing. Sometimes, language seems to rest before the grandiloquence of the theme itself, like for example in some of Amadeus' most ardent confessions, or Yonadab's most intense conflicts, or David's most intense moments of prayer.

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[127] "The idea of 'prose tragedy' is singularly modern, and to many poets and critics it remains paradoxical" (Steiner 238).

[128] "The world of prose is that in which money counts, and the ascendancy of prose in western literature coincides with the development during the sixteenth century of modern economic relations" (Steiner 263).

In Euripides' **Medea**, the argument between Jason and Medea around the question of justice is central. Rhetoric is evident in the richness of the illustrations, in the fluency of the thoughts, and in the use of logic with the purpose of being convincing. A similar handling of language is evident in Tamar, Absalom, and Yonadab in Shaffer's **Yonadab**. The discussion of justice and legitimacy also becomes explicit in Atahuallpa's request for freedom in **The Royal Hunt** and in Salieri's speeches to the audience in **Amadeus**, confessing his guilt in the death of Mozart and at the same accusing God of being unjust.

For Shaffer it is clear that communication is possible among human beings, although very problematic and sometimes on the verge of impossibility, like in Alan's loneliness and resistance to Dysart's insistence, in **Equus**. Alan's lack of articulation reveals his pathological incapacity for human relationships, while it also indicates the predominance of mass media communication, conveyed by allusions to slogans, jingles, and TV advertisements. But although communication is in danger, even in the family sphere, Dysart is in control of the situation and rationalizes Alan's silence, forcing him to open up.

In spite of their fragmentation and use of clichés, there are no absurd dialogues in **The Royal Hunt**, in **Amadeus**, or in **Yonadab.** In **The Royal Hunt** Pizarro can communicate with Atahuallpa and Martin can establish a bridge with the audience. Salieri and Yonadab are similar in their ability to express their thoughts, with irony, and many times using vulgar language, differently from Martin in **The Royal Hunt**, for example, who preserves his self-respect and speaks of Pizarro and Atahuallpa with dignity. In **Yonadab**, language fulfils many functions, but the main one is dissimulation, hiding the real feelings, the real intentions. Thus, Tamar uses language to deceive Yonadab and Absalom, for example. In **Amadeus**, Salieri uses language both to confess his guilt and to reveal his innocence, and to achieve fame by infamy. This complex use of language is enhanced by the presence of the Venticelli, who represent society and create an atmosphiere of gossip.

Shaffer prefers the colloquial, with moments of rhetorical enthusiasm, sometimes almost poetical, but always ironical and deeply self-conscious. His language can be ambiguous, but it is never absurd. However characters are always under the menace of ennui, mediocrity, and despair. For the Greeks, communication is also possible although generating a lot of misunderstanding, like in **Oedipus**. Ambiguity is inherent in every line spoken by Tiresias and Oedipus himself. Even Apollo, in his oracle, speaks ambiguously; his revelations conceal the truth. Words help to

express the feelings of the characters and to hide their real situation. Dissimulation is also present in Medea's use of language.

Some of the criticism on Shaffer's plays is centered on his language. Critics say that the plays reveal poor and superficial language. B. A. Young, for example, commenting on Shaffer's **The Royal Hunt**, says that "[t]he qualities in which the play is on the whole short are beauty of language and profundity, as opposed to importance, of argument..." (*apud* Cooke and Page 27). Walter Kerr, writing for the **New York Herald Tribune**, says that "[t]he language of the play [**The Royal Hunt**] has less impact than his boldly literal images" (*apud* Cooke and Page 29). For sure, comparing him to the Greeks, it is possible to notice the Greeks' superior care with language, their profusion of images and metaphors, their variation of rhythm and style, their preference for the elevated language, in contrast to the quotidian. The Greeks were more lyrical, while Shaffer is more colloquial, even though sometimes the Greeks could be very colloquial, like in Jason's quarrels with Medea, and Shaffer could be very lyrical, like in Pizarro's last lines over the body of Atahuallpa. But although some say Shaffer's language is too rhetorical and artificial, in fact he writes with elegance, subtlety and simphcity, with great control of rhythm. As a great connoisseur of classical music, Shaffer displays rich musical variation in the rhythm and pattern of his language. Besides, he shows a great variety of themes and vocabulary in many different areas—psychoanalysis, classical music, history, the biblical narrative of the life of King David, and the Jewish and Christian tradition. The richness of his language is enhanced by the visual and aural elements of his plays which suggest the limits of the spoken word, the crisis into which the logocentric culture is sinking, a crisis of history, art, science, and education.[129] Through them the great narratives of the Western world are caught in the air and emptied out of their authority. In fact, Shaffer plays with the official narratives, presenting alternative versions, like in Yonadab's retaking of the Biblical narrative, or in Salieri's retelling of Mozart's story.

Like the Greeks, Shaffer also uses *stichomythia* to speed the action and enhance conflict, but differently from the Greeks he marks the script with several pauses and short intervals, making silence eloquent, slowing down the action, and thus varying the rhythm. The Greek plays do not offer stage directions, but the absence of pause indications does not mean that they did not

[129] "Tragic drama tells us that the spheres of reason, order, and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge relevance. Outside and within man is *l'autre*, the 'otherness' of the world" (Steiner 8-9).

know the importance of pause. However, the contemporary dramatist is much more conscious about the use of it.

While in the Greek tragedies dialogues are more formal and stylized, sometimes very poetic like in **Prometheus** or rhetorical like in **Medea**, with Shaffer, dialogues tend to a more naturalistic form, nearer the quotidian interchange. Shaffer's characters can be laconic like Alan, rational like Dysart, philosophical like Yonadab, rude like Pizarro, in a great variety of discourses and performances in dialogue. For sure, tragedy is always a dialogue, a debate about what is happening in society, in history, in the world.

In terms of characterization Shaffer, like the Greeks, uses several resources: dialogues, monologues, costumes, visual and aural devices, and the contrast among characters.[130] Differently from the Greek plays, however, Shaffer uses a character-narrator to introduce and comment on the other characters and to explain the situation. Thus Old Martin is a fundamental instrument of characterization in **The Royal Hunt**, presenting and interpreting the complex relation between Pizarro and Atahuallpa, the fall of the Inca Empire and the moral crisis in the Spanish Empire. Yonadab is mainly characterized by his ability to speak with ingenuity and elusiveness, and by his capacity to curse. His power comes exactly from his dominion and articulation of language, which allows him to discuss, convince, interpret symbols, create images, legends, and propose an alternative reading of his culture. The same can be said about Medea. As a character, Medea is marked by her articulateness, which is described in terms of witchcraft because of her ability to curse and lie. Alan in **Equus** shows some ability to dissimulate and to reach the divine. Another characteristic of Medea, which can also be seen in Yonadab and in Salieri, is her capacity for scheming her vengeance and her escape. Dysart and Pizarro are also clever in manipulating people—Dysart manipulates Alan in order to extort information, and Pizarro arrests Atahuallpa in order to conquer the new world and survive. Similarly, Prometheus is also characterized by his ability to articulate and prepare a vengeance, in spite of his immobility. He protests and resists Zeus's violence and pressures.

The Greek tragic characters as well as Shaffer's are in search of something beyond material advantages. Prometheus, Oedipus and Medea are characters in fight for their own dignity. They want something that is beyond the mere accumulation of gold, money, honor, and temporal power. Prometheus wants justice and welfare for mankind, Medea wants justice and

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[130] Shaffer has a great talent for "manipulating the physical possibilities of the theatre" (Taylor **Peter Shaffer** 13-4).

also the recognition of her value as a woman, Oedipus wants knowledge of himself, the disclosure of his own mysterious origin and nature, a dangerous endeavor. The same desire for self-knowledge can be seen in **Equus**, embodied in the craving for a myth that could explain and inspire the self. Dysart wants to recover passion, intuition, a new enthusiastic myth that could give him back his sense of living. Similarly, Salieri wants to serve the Lord and be rewarded with talent and dignity; he wants in fact immortality and perpetual fame. Pizzaro wants more than mundane success and gold, he craves for eternity, for overcoming Death. He has lost his faith and is fascinated by the possibility of recapturing it through Atahuallpa. Yonadab craves for a new kingdom, less violent, and less hateful. Pizarro, Salieri, Yonadab, and Dysart bring with them their past frustrations, and search for the redemption of the present. By trying to make the best decision or conquering fame, they try to achieve a meaning for life, transcendence, acceptance, and a new experience with the world.

Prometheus foresees his liberation and the change of power in Olympus, although after staying a long period under the earth; Oedipus achieves his self-knowledge, although paying a high price for it—pain and blindness—; Medea achieves her vengeance and flees from punishment, although without her children. Yet Shaffer's characters are not so successful: Pizarro conquers the Inca Empire but his faith dies in disillusion and disappointment; Dysart cures the boy but lives in total emptiness; Salieri destroys Mozart but God punishes him with decadence and mediocrity; Yonadab tries to destroy the house of King David but Tamar cheats him and wins; Yonadab is condemned to be a voyeur for eternity. Frustration and bitterness, with small or no compensation, and the absence of redemption or of consolation mark Shaffer's characters.

The Greek characters represent more than their subjectivity, than their personal dilemmas. In fact, they incarnate the dramas of their time, their cultural crises, their institutional, historical doubts, which include the twilight of myths, democracy, and the appearance of a new social order.[131] Shaffer's characters also represent more than personal problems and private anguishes.[132] Atahuallpa and Pizarro represent two different worlds, two empires, and two

[131] According to John B. Morrall, in Sophocles one can already see that the tragic world created by Aeschylus, a world in which conflicts must be solved through voluntary agreement, begins to disintegrate into a world which privileges the wish of the majority. The estrangement from Aeschylus' synthesis attains its peak in Euripides' tragedies which are centred on matters of personal behavior and psychology and in which the characters are obliged to choose between death or undignified submission (**Aristóteles** 14-15).

[132] Regina Alfarano explains very well how, in Shaffer, the social and the individual concerns are interrelated, "a ânsia do indivíduo pelo contato com a sociedade, seu grande empenho neste processo; o receio à exposição, e, ao mesmo tempo, a consciência da necessidade desta exposição..." (150). Alfarano calls it "a dialética shafferiana" (150).

different attitudes toward life. They incarnate a historical clash of cultures, a historical social event.[133] And besides the historical crisis, Pizarro experiences a metaphysical battle. Like twin brothers in fight for power, Atahuallpa and Pizarro (the Inca and the Spaniard) are both noble and bastards. One represents the ideal world and the other the real one, one faith the other disillusionment and cynicism. In *Amadeus*, Salieri and Mozart share the same space, Vienna, but they belong to different worlds. One is a noble, well-succeeded but empty artist, tormented with envy, and the other a prodigious, talented but poor composer; one a despised genius, the other an illustrious mediocre; the blessed and the cursed, the beloved of God and the rejected one face each other. The history and the value of art are placed in a dangerous, conflicting situation. The metaphysical preoccupation is also present. In *Yonadab*, David and Yonadab represent two different views of life, the official, chosen, blessed but brute one, and the frustrated, alternative, sly and tender one. They represent also two different social orders, and through them Shaffer presents the crisis of the Western Culture. More than private matters, all the characters represent views of the world, possibilities, tendencies, and tensions in society.

Names are full of meaning in Greek tragedy. The very name of Oedipus provides a hint for the discovery of his own identity. The meaning is there, although it is surprisingly ignored. Prometheus also has in his name the mark of his own character. Shaffer explores the richness of meanings in the names of the Indians in **The Royal Hunt** and also the ambiguous and sometimes ironic meanings of names in the Jewish tradition in his **Yonadab**. The deepest implications of the name Amadeus are not avoided by Shaffer, and the meaning of Equus, among other names, is explicitly explored in **Equus**.

In the Greeks as well as in Shaffer, characterization is enriched by contrast between the characters. In this sense the blindness of Oedipus is denounced by Tiresias' keen view of the situation, Io's mobility enhances Prometheus' condition as a prisoner of Zeus, and Medea's stubborn and silent spirit of revenge is counterpointed by Jason's violent mood. Similarly, in Shaffer's plays, Salieri's disillusion is enhanced and counterbalanced by Mozart's divine genius and sublimity of creation; Pizarro's sense of existential emptiness is contrasted to Atahuallpa's

[133] Raymond Williams has an important hint on tragedy and historical context: "Important tragedy seems to occur, neither in periods of real stability, nor in periods of open and decisive conflict. Its most common historical setting is the period preceding the substantial breakdown and transformation of an important culture. Its condition is the real tension between old and new: between received beliefs, embodied in institutions and responses, and newly and vividly experienced contradictions and responses, and newly and vividly experienced contradictions and possibilities" (54).

sense of dignity, faith and meaningfulness; the incapacity of Yonadab, his frailty, his hesitation and almost feminine cowardice contrast with Tamar's masculine presence, her efficient determination and subtlety; Alan's pathology is balanced by his tormented religious passion and clarified by Dysart's tedious and resigned reality. In fact, through the interchange among the characters, Shaffer achieves great results in the creation of his characters whose relations are marked by hostility; sympathy is rare and always undermined by irony.

Indeed, Shaffer's characters are strongly marked by irony, which saps their rehgious foundations, their social roles, and their nobility in society. In **Yonadab**, for example, irony destroys all the reliability of the narrator. In **Amadeus**, ambiguity is strong and terrible. In **The Royal Hunt**, irony destroys any nobility of character, any heroic proposition, although the figure of Atahuallpa remains as a clear contrast and a point of reference. In a way, Shaffer's characters are haunted by the presence of their past, by their terrible memories, as well as by their wish of redemption and immortality. However they see their future happiness flowing off their hands.

Besides language, one of the criticisms on Shaffer has to do with characterization—superficiality, merely rhetorical and visual exuberance, with no psychological depth. According to this view, his characters lack sincerity and are not convincing. Philip Hope-Wallace comments on how Shaffer's characters are "shallow characters.... It did not catch me up into emotional surrender or belief" (*apud* Cooke and Page 11). However, I think it is not the case. It is too harsh and unjust a criticism. John Russel Taylor, commenting on **Five Finger Exercise** by Shaffer, observing his virtues in characterization, praises his ability "bit by bit to strip its characters and their way of life bare with as much ruthlessness as Ionesco sets about rather the same business in **The Bald Prima Donna**. Only here the weapon is psychological penetration..." (*apud* Cooke and Page 11-2). Dysart, by abundant references to his dreams and to his internal ambiguities, as well as by his complex relations with other characters, reveals depth of personality and his conflicts are complex and rich.

The conflicts in Shaffer's plays have several dimensions—they are political, personal, psychological and metaphysical. Pizarro, as created by Shaffer, is different from the historical figure described by historians like Prescott. Shaffer's view of the conquistador reveals the richness of his soul, something beyond the historical figure. His personal battles, his existential anguish, his philosophical insights and metaphysical concerns give him complexity and profundity. Salleri's torments are also very well weaved and Yonadab is not any shallow character but an enigmatic figure, a character that seems to encompass the clear vision of Tiresias

and the blind naïveté of Oedipus, the machinations of Medea and the hesitation of Creon. In short, Shaffer's characters are human, they have the capacity for suffering, they live surrounded by doubts and shortcomings. They are poisoned by passion, by lack of control, and are psychologically tortured by a poignant consciousness of their condition, of their desperate situation. Thus they display psychiological depth, relational breadth, and historical and emotional height. The use of a narrator—Dysart, Salieri, Yonadab, Old Martin—really represents a challenge for Shaffer: how to show the several different perspectives of the conflict? But he succeeds in **Equus**, in which Alan's problem is seen not only under Dysart's view but also according to Alan's father and mother, Jill and the owner of the horses. The same happens in **Yonadab**, in which the figure of Tamar completes and menaces, almost destroys in fact, the vision of Yonadab.

The structure of the Greek plays revolves around a main conflict, which in **Oedipus** can be identified in the quarrel between Oedipus and Tiresias. In **Medea** the main conflict involves Medea versus Jason, in **Prometheus** it refers to Prometheus' fight against Zeus. In Shaffer's plays conflict is also the central element of the structure. In **The Royal Hunt** the structure makes evident the confrontation between two great nations—the Inca and the Spanish—represented by the two main characters Pizarro and Atahuallpa. In **Amadeus** the conflict is personal, relational (Salieri and Mozart), although hiding a deeper antagonism: the human being against God.[134] In **Equus** the conflict puts face to face Alan and Dysart and is related to sanity and insanity, rationality and passion, a personal myth versus an organized but decadent society. Alan and Dysart seem to divide the world into day and night, reality and dream, consciousness and unconsciousness, pain and pleasure. In **Yonadab** the conflict is multiple: Yonadab versus David's family, Yonadab versus Tamar, but it is, in a deeper level, Yonadab against Yaveh. Thus family, political, cultural conflicts serve as framework for a more spiritual, psychological, or metaphysical conflict: the individual against God, the individual against his own condition, temporality versus eternity. In fact the divine presence as an opponent force is visible in all the plays by Shaffer under analysis:[135] religion justifies the conquerors' crimes in **The Royal Hunt**, although it also inspires the Indians' resistance; God is unjust, according to Salieri and Yonadab.

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[134] The presence of God is fundamental in Shaffer's plays, what seems to contradict Steiner's view of modernity: "But tragedy is that form of art which requires the intolerable burden of God's presence. It is now dead because His shadow no longer falls upon us as it fell on Agamemnon or Macbeth or Athalie" (Steiner 353).

[135] "Notemos que em momento algum Shaffer duvida da existência de uma entidade divina. O conflito se baseia na ânsia de sua percepção. Justamente por existir, deve ser sentido" (Alfarano 167).

Similarly, religion accomplishes a destructive role in **Oedipus** and **Prometheus**.[136] There is no hope of change, only resignation, and the acceptance of destiny. However, the presence of God has a redemptive function in **Medea**, in which it is possible to see the "Deus Ex-Machina." Some readers could question the centrality of God as a theme in Shaffer's plays, in a century marked by disillusionment and incredulity in the Western civilization. Some could say that the very absence of God makes tragedy impossible. However, Shaffer uses the presence of God without a redemptive force, just to emphasize the sense of decadence of the present time. The absence of God, or the ineffective presence of God, His indifference, makes the human situation even more tragic.

The emphasis on the vision of life as a judicial process is visible in **The Royal Hunt**, in which Atahuallpa is judged and condemned by the Spaniards, in **Amadeus** through Salieri's self-condemnation and fake execution, in **Yonadab** through Yonadab's involvement in many crimes and final punishment and curse. But in **Equus** the juridical element is replaced with the psychoanalytical, although at the beginning of the play it is clear that Alan is sent to Dysart by legal institutions. The Greek plays analyzed—**Prometheus**, **Oedipus**, and **Medea**—also have this juridical ingredient.

In Shaffer's plays, as it occurs with the Greek ones, the point of attack comes late, usually the last days of the narrator's life—Old Martin addressing the audience, old Salieri near death—, or when they are already experienced men, like Yonadab and Dysart. That provides for the unity of action. But in contrast with the Greeks, who present the events chronologically, Shaffer presents scenes in flashback as they are told by the narrator, splitting the unity of time, confronting the past and the present time, sometimes presenting them simultaneously, as in Alan's agony in reporting his past.[137] Some events of the past are reported by the characters, as in the Greek plays, but others are enacted on the stage. This rethinking of the past both confirms the validity of the tradition and alters the fictional order, conveying the post-modern notion of fragmentary time, and fragmentary reality. The story is always told by memory, from a posterior point of view, in the present. By placing his plays in the past time, Shaffer achieves a historical

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[136] There is a good analysis of the presence of God in Shaffer's play **The Gift of the Gorgon**, in a Master's Dissertation by Liang Yan (USP), which characterizes Shaffer as an author in quest of truth, perfection and faith, of course, not the Christian or Jewish notion of faith, but a more vague and artistic notion (**Peter Shaffer: The Apollonian-Dionysian Conflict in the Gift of the Gorgon**).

[137] "The techniques of flashbacks, masks, dreams, nicknames, and games tie **Amadeus** to Shaffer's other plays. Both **Equus** and **The Royal Hunt of the Sun** share the common trait with **Amadeus** of a narration in present time ... of the events that transpired before the plays begin" (Klein 143).

displacement that helps to distance the audience, providing estrangement from reality. Shaffer's narrators are voices from the past—Old Martin, Yonadab, Salieri—addressing the present, with the exception of Dysart. They are voices from the past, from the dead ones. Time is even treated as a problem, thematically, as it is approached in **The Royal Hunt**—Pizarro's anxious thoughts—, or in **Amadeus**—Salieri's disillusion. Differently from Shaffer, the Greek plays have no narrator and, although being centered on one specific character, like Oedipus for example, they just present characters interacting.[138]

Unity of place is problematized in Shaffer's plays, precisely in the same scenes that present two characters speaking from two different places. Shaffer uses the device of the inner and outer stages, thus suggesting different spaces, helped by light and sound devices. In very rare occasions, the Greeks used a device called *periactos*, a kind of whirling portable scenery, to present a change of locale. But the simultaneous presentation of different places and moments in time was totally unknown to them.

Shaffer's plays evince the same economy and balance usually found in the Greek plays: concentration, harmony of the parts, a central conflict surrounded by minor ones, a development that culminates in the climax and in the dénouement. Cohesion is the mark of Shaffer's plays. And like in the Greek plays, the action flows without interruption, although some of his plays have at least two great divisions. The action is meant to flow continuously, and its division into scenes is established just on the written text, for the director, not for the audience. **The Royal Hunt**, **Equus**, **Amadeus**, and **Yonadab** are divided into two main parts, each one culminating in a violent, intense scene. Just when the tension is at its highest pitch the scene is suddenly interrupted.

In the Greek tragedy the Chorus has an important function in terms of structure, interrupting the development of the story to introduce commentaries, invocations, laments, songs and dancing, thus enhancing the emotional force of the drama. Interestingly, as the number of the members of the Chorus increases from 12 in Aeschylus to 15 in Sophocles, its importance diminishes accordingly whereas the actors increase in number (from two to three) and in importance. In Shaffer there is no Chorus in the traditional sense of the word, but he insisted in creating some sort of substitute. In **Equus**, for example, he attributes to Equus and to the horses the function of a Chorus. Although they do not sing or convey any intelligible idea and only

[138] In **Medea** the Nurse can be seen as a device that fulfils a function very close to the narrator's.

perform choreographic movements and make strange and terrifying noises they enhance tension and emotion. Indeed, the Greek Chorus was responsible for the choreography of the play, providing a spectacle of music and dance, and we find it in **Equus**, **Amadeus**, **Yonadab** and **The Royal Hunt**. Another similarity is that Shaffer's choruses are also presented as a collectivity, either a group of soldiers, or horses, or brothers, or servants. But differently from the Greeks, Shaffer reserves the choreographic chorus for the most tense and violent scenes, like the massacre of the Inca people, the killing of Amnon, or the blinding of the horses. Choreography is also present in the sensuous scenes, like Tamar's dance and Alan's frantic night rides, or in the moments of madness, when the limits of the rational are crossed, like in Pizarro's frantic dance around Atahuallpa.

Shaffer tries to recover the importance of the Chorus in his modern drama, thus recognizing the heritage of the Greeks, and the significance of the formal aspects. By reviving the Chorus, he establishes a link with the Greek tradition. But he endows it with a quite different format, without using verbal interventions, emphasizing dance and music, enhancing emotion and creating an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Shaffer's attempt, however, indicates how much the Chorus has lost its importance in the contemporary theatre. It may also point to the solitude of present life, since the traditional Chorus implies a community, the recognition that people are part of a society that cares. It also emphasize the importance of emotion, and the value of physical movements so necessary as the spoken words. Interestingly, as Professor Carlinda Nuñez observes, the Greek Chorus did not wear masks, suggesting their proximity to the audience, and their representative role in relation to society, in contrast to the actors who wore masks (Nuñez 307). The Chorus usually represented the institutions of society, the past world, and the traditional heritage. In contrast, in Shaffer's **Equus** the Chorus wears masks and represents a myth, a god, neither the audience nor society. The presence of Equus fills the stage with fearful sounds, but with no pity; no solidarity is implied. In **Amadeus** the Venticelli represent society, they perform in style and speak gossips, but show no real solidarity for Mozart's sad condition or for Salieri's decadence.

Shaffer uses mimicry in his plays as a form of restoring the physical movements, the choreography of the Greek tragedy. For the Greeks the Chorus represents a chance of including society into the drama. Shaffer achieves the inclusion of society not through the Chorus but through the use of quotidian language, common citizen characters, the scenery, objects and sound effects that suggest the contemporary world. Instead of a Chorus addressing the audience like in

the Greek plays, Shaffer prefers the device of a Narrator who describes the action, addresses the audience, comments on the scenes, interacts with the other characters, and controls and directs the order of events, coordinating the several moments in time, thus being a true structuring element. For Shaffer, the Narrator, not the Chorus, structures the play, although as a dramatist he attempts to recover the importance of the Chorus in modern theatre. Indeed, as Shaffer's Chorus differs from the Greek one, it conveys a sense of historical change and calls for a debate about two different ways of seeing the world.

In the Greek plays the Chorus was also responsible for the invocation of the deities, for the prayers and libations. It established a link with the sacred. Shaffer provides it through the characters of the play, like Salieri in **Amadeus**, or like King David and Tamar in **Yonadab**, or like Atahuallpa in **The Royal Hunt**, and Alan in **Equus**.

The emotional drive of the Chorus in the Greek plays finds its substitute in Shaffer's use of aural and visual devices—music, light and dance. In the Greek tragedy, the Chorus usually shows sympathy for the hero's condition, enhancing the sense of pity and fear in the audience. In Shaffer, the sense of sympathy is problematic, since the world is seen now as a much more cold and indifferent environment, although in **Equus** Dysart is totally touched by Alan's condition, and in **The Royal Hunt** Pizarro is really affected by Atahuallpa and Martin is disturbed by Pizarro's disillusionment. No pity, however, underlies Salieri's contact with Mozart in **Amadeus**, nor Yonadab's with David's or Tamar's suffering.

Tension moves in a crescendo in **Prometheus**, **Oedipus**, and in **Medea**. In his turn, Shaffer handles tension very well in the four plays, using the artifices of suspense and surprise like in the increasingly terrible situation of Atahuallpa being arrested in **The Royal Hunt**, while the situation becomes rotten outside, with all the Spanish soldiers drinking and fighting for gold. The imminence of chaos creates a suffocating expectation, which is enhanced by the aural and visual effects. At the same time, tension is also created by Pizarro's personal involvement with Atahuallpa, by their growing intimacy, which is tension in a personal and relational level. Besides this, Pizarro reveals psychological and philosophical tension, related to his existential crisis.

In **Equus**, tension also has a metaphysical as well as an existential feature, but its main characteristic is psychological, centred on Alan's conflict with the mythological figure of Equus and on Dysart's anguish with the emptiness of his own life. Surprise is also used in **Equus** to enhance tension, as when Dysart recognizes that Alan's problem with Jill and Equus' supernatural manifestations has to do with sexual frustration and fear. In this play, as well as in

The Royal Hunt, the element of suspense is fundamental, concerning the future of Atahuallpa, the future of Pizarro's expedition, Alan's future and the secret of his relation with Equus. In **Amadeus** and **Yonadab**, tension is related respectively to the destruction of Mozart and to the destruction of King David's house, and at the same time to the possibility of God's terrible intervention. Salieri and Yonadab are disappointed at first with God's delay and surprised afterwards with His silent and unquestionable interference.

In all the four plays by Shaffer under analysis, tension is a fundamental element very well handled, controlled and leading to the most violent scenes—*pathos*—and sometimes to *bathos*. Yonadab is frustrated in his wish to watch Amnon's sexual intercourse with Tamar; the scene of her rape culminates in Yonadab's derisive commentary, and is followed by Tamar's unforgettable solitary walk through the streets of Jerusalem. The climax of Act I of **The Royal Hunt** culminates in the bloody scene of the massacre of the Indians, while the tension continues and culminates in Act II with the killing of Atahuallpa, the lament of the Indians, and the abandonment of Pizarro. The victorious escape of Medea in Euripides' tragedy, after the tense scene of the killing of her children finds a parallel in Tamar's revenge and victorious discourse in Shaffer's **Yonadab**.

In Shaffer, tension is enhanced by a very effective handling of pause, precisely marked on the script, as in the scene of Alan's interchanges with Dysart in **Equus**. The frequent pauses, sometimes longer sometimes shorter, intensify tension. In **Amadeus** tension revolves around both Mozart's physical decadence and Salieri's moral and psychological ruin.

The visual element is also used by Shaffer to create tension. In **The Royal Hunt**, for example, the red cloth symbolizes blood, in the scene of the massacre, and in **Yonadab**, the curtains that are transparent and opaque at the same time hide Yonadab's view. Thus decoration enhances tension. This is true also in relation to the Greek plays, as in the curtains and clothes covered with blood in **Oedipus**, or in the poisoned bridal mantle in **Medea**.

In Euripides' **Medea** and Shaffer's **Amadeus** and **Yonadab** tension issues mainly from a character who makes plans of vengeance. The spectators wonder at the result, face the possibility of failure, and watch the execution of the plan and its results. While in Euripedes Medea's revenge is successful, although at the price of her children's death, in Shaffer vengeance achieves always partial results, for Salieri destroys Mozart's physical life but is destroyed by God, Yonadab scratches David's family but is defeated and cursed.

In the Greek plays as well as in Shaffer's, the menacing presence of God is fundamental in terms of tension. In **Prometheus** the menacing presence of Zeus enhances tension. The whole play is the waiting for Zeus' final execution on Prometheus bound to the rocks. At the end of the play this menace is confirmed by Prometheus being buried under the earth, although he foresees his own future liberation and Zeus' dethronement. In **Oedipus** tension is enhanced by the constant allusions to the oracles condemning Oedipus to kill his own father and marry his mother. Bad omens are also present in **The Royal Hunt** and create a great amount of tension in the Indians and in the Spanish soldiers. The same is visible in Dysart's dreams in **Equus**, in Yonadab's dreams and omens in **Yonadab** and in Mozart's dreams in **Amadeus**. In these three plays, God is invisible but present, indeed a menacing and pervasive presence, always ready to punish the protagonist. Mental insanity is another great generator and sustainer of tension in **Equus**, while in **Oedipus** it is replaced by personal torment about the hero's identity and in **Medea** it is related to jealousy and hatred.

It is precisely the accumulation of tension that guarantees the triggering of pity and fear that result in *catharsis* in Shaffer's plays. The criticism that Shaffer's plays have no emotional density (Philip Hope-Wallace *apud* Cooke and Page 11) has no foundation. All Shaffer's plays under analysis are dense and deep in emotional weight, since suspense is ever present and sometimes surprise is provided, like in Tamar's sudden reversal of the situation and control in **Yonadab**, for example. In **Amadeus**, Salieri achieves great results in involving the audience, through a sense of complicity. By confessing and begging absolution he establishes a link with the audience, which is strengthened by his posing as an anti-saint patron of the mediocre.

Like the Greek dramatists, Shaffer demonstrates in the plays analyzed a preference for serious themes such as self-knowledge, human relationships, religious and political values, justice, dignity and great passions like jealousy, hatred, envy, always under the shadow of a divine entity. In **Oedipus** Sophocles sees tragedy as the revelation of truth, the uncovering of Oedipus' personal truth and real identity. Shaffer also sees tragedy as a revelation of truth. In **Equus** Dysart discovers his real condition through Alan's anguishes and personal tragedy. And as for Oedipus self-discovery is a painful and destructive experience, so it is for Dysart. Besides, in **Yonadab** and in **Amadeus**, the revelation of truth is involved in great ambiguity, with metaphysical and theological implications. Truth is not only ambiguous for Shaffer; it is ironic. Like in the Greek tragedies, Shaffer's plays are full of irony for the unexpected events do occur and the extraordinary reversal of what was expected does happen.

The political dimension is present in Aeschylus' **Prometheus**, under the superficial conflict between divine entities. In fact, the "protectors" of the city and its citizens are in fight for power—Zeus versus Prometheus. The theme of political change in Aeschylus' play anticipates or testifies to the transformations in the Greek society of the time, in which a new world was replacing the old one with its old achievements and values. In Shaffer, power as a theme, involving the use of violence in search of legitimacy, recurs in all the plays selected. In both Shaffer and the Greeks, either implicitly or explicitly, one finds the story of a transgression against something holy, an offence to some god—like in **Prometheus** and in **Equus**—, or to a temple, a deity, an oracle—like in **Oedipus** and in **Yonadab**.

Although the discussion about legitimacy, justice and law in the changing movements of social life is less evident in Shaffer, who is much more concerned with metaphysical and existential themes, there is a criticism of Western culture in his plays, a criticism of institutions such as monarchy and the Christian religion (in **The Royal Hunt**), consumerism and capitalist alienation (in **Equus**), court superficiality and vanity (in **Amadeus**), and Jewish culture and values (in **Yonadab**). In Shaffer, the pohtical dimension of the cultural crisis is most evident in two of the plays selected: **Equus** and **Yonadab**. In both, the rejection of the Jewish and Christian traditions is fundamental. In spite of that, the world is not changed, and a substitute mythology is not found. Christianity survives in **Amadeus** and Yaveh is the great winner in **Yonadab**, even though irony, cynicism, and disillusion prevail in **The Royal Hunt** and lack of real faith and meaning in **Equus**.

Greek tragedy reflects the evolution of the religious and juridical thought of that society in transition. It is visible in Prometheus' claims for justice, in Oedipus' search for the guilty culprit, in Medea's search for retribution. So does Shaffer who denounces the crisis of the religious and political institutions of modernity, the transition and alterations in our post-modern culture.[139] The several executions in **Yonadab**, the massacre of the Indians and the execution of Atahuallpa in **The Royal Hunt**, the repressive psychoanalysis and its violence on Alan in **Equus** are evidences of the modem crisis. Atahuallpa is garroted, Mozart is destroyed, Amnon is stoned, and Alan is psychologically lobotomized. In **Amadeus**, Salieri becomes the public prosecutor,

[139] Ligia Costa comments that the tragic inhabits modernity through the presence of a crisis of values, the tension of uncertainties (Costa 28), a rejection of the Renaissance values, and the tension between the Christian Middle Ages and the new scientific order (29).

criminal, judge, executor, and victim of his own violence when he attempts suicide. State and religion are present in all the plays by Shaffer scrutinized in the present work.

Shaffer's plays convey a certain ennui and pessimism, like in **Equus** and **Yonadab**. The absence of a meaningful relationship with God is denounced in **Amadeus**—Salieri's piety is not rewarded, and Mozart's mundane behavior is justified by God, who favours him instead of Salieri, although he dies young. Pizarro, Old Martin, Salieri, Dysart and Yonadab experience a sense of disillusion in life: they miss an authentic expression of faith. In a way, they embody the post-modern crisis of faith. Yonadab and Pizarro express very well the crisis of the unbeliever, the wish to believe that lies in the heart of the cynical man.[140] The hands of destiny crush Yonadab, Pizarro, Salieri, and Dysart, although they resist and fight for their dignity, and try to find the meaning of their lives.[141] In fact, there is a certain nostalgia for a lost idealism, an urge for the dreams of the past, a cry on the loss of innocence. Martin's innocence, Atahuallpa's credulity, Alan's maddening passion, Mozart's genius, and Yonadab's intelligent sensibility are like laments. But things are not so simple. In **Equus**, Shaffer seems to offer an eulogy of madness since Alan's new created myth is the result of pure disease. Similarly, **Amadeus** and **Yonadab** seem to make an apology of mediocrity and cowardice. Yet Salieri's and Yonadab's Machiavellism is unmasked, and their authoritarian cruelty is denounced.

Suffering is portrayed in the Greek plays selected, either the suffering of being supplanted by a superior power (**Prometheus**), or the suffering of knowing oneself and destroying one's own most sacred relations (**Oedipus**), or the moral suffering of Medea, betrayed by her husband and condemned to exile. In a certain way, suffering is explained as a consequence of human curiosity, stubbornness, and resistance to authority. In Shaffer, suffering has its metaphysical implications: it is part of human life, limited by Time and menaced by Death, as Pizarro explains in **The Royal Hunt**. Shaffer also portrays an emotional trauma in **Equus**, as well as the psychological and cultural emptiness of our modern society, its lack of passion and intuition. In **Yonadab** and

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[140] At this point, Von Szeliski has a great question: "isn't the most crucial failure of modern tragic art its unprecedent insistence on a terrified, wailing, pessimistic view of existence?" (3). According to him, Greek tragedy was strongly characterized by optimism, hope, ritualism (von Szeliski 27). However, optimism is something very difficult to simply be applied to the Greeks, and pessimism is something that does not explain all the richness of Shaffer's plays.

[141] In fact, what is tragic in relation to Shaffer's characters is not the affirmition of evil, or the resignation to pessimism, but the survival of it. Raymond Williams helps to understand this: "The affirmation of absolute Evil, which is now so current [1966], is, under pressure, self-blinding; the self-blinding of a culture which, lacking the nerve to inquire into its own nature, would have not only actors but also spectators put out their eyes. What is offered as tragic significance is here, as elsewhere, a significant denial of the possibility of *any* meaning" (Williams 61). Pessimism is not permanent or absolute in Shaffer.

Amadeus, suffering is related to the condemnation of the common citizen to a life of envy, mediocrity, and rejection. Thus, suffering is presented as part of the human condition.

It is necessary to note that Sophocles' **Oedipus** is part of a trilogy, and suffering is then seen under a larger perspective and in a way redeemed in the continuation of the cycle, as the hero gets old and undergoes other experiences. He finally finds relief in **Oedipus at Colonus**. Medea is saved in Euripides' play and Prometheus anticipates his freedom. Shaffer's characters do not have the opportunity of such a continuation and redemption. Alan's and Dysart's future is lifeless, Old Martin's old age is unhappy, Salieri survives in a limb of mediocrity for good, and Yonadab is cursed as long as he lives and beyond.

Madness by the excess of rage or passion is developed as a theme in **Medea**,[142] **Amadeus**, and **Equus**—Salieri and Dysart face madness and have different reactions, Salieri is destroyed by it, whereas Dysart resists and exorcises it. Even in **Prometheus** there are some characters that live in the verge of insanity, like Io. For Shaffer, the pressure of an alienated and violent society aggravates Alan's insanity. Dysart's unhappy life also has its pathological implications. Pizarro has moments of insanity too, while Atahuallpa in **The Royal Hunt** consoles him. Mozart also shows evidences of madness when he is near death and rests in Constanze's arms, while Salieri ends up in complete insanity in **Amadeus**. Amnon is dominated by lust to the limits of madness in **Yonadab**.

Family relations are also an important recurring theme in Shaffer's plays which present, like in **Equus**, a complex situation between Alan and his father, reflected in Alan's relation with Dysart. There are no happy families in Shaffer's plays. Even Mozart's relationship with Constanze, although full of naïveté and tenderness, is unbalanced and subject to many crises. The same pattern of father-and-son relationship can be observed between Young Martin and Pizarro in **The Royal Hunt**, Mozart and his father in **Amadeus**, and David and his children in **Yonadab**. Family relations are a fundamental source of inspiration in Greek tragedy, evident in **Prometheus**, **Oedipus**, and **Medea**. In the context of human relations, revenge is an important aspect for the Greeks and for Shaffer: Prometheus, Medea, Salieri, Tamar, and Yonadab want revenge.

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[142] In Euripides, where "the tragic form was employed to accommodate a sceptical spirit," the hero was created to adapt to a skeptical spirit (Leech 34).

In **Equus**, beside the themes of madness, passion and family relations, there is an important ethic imperative, Dysart's dilemma: to treat or not to treat Alan, to exorcise or not to exorcise his demons, to cure or not to cure his mind. Professional ethics can also be perceived in Oedipus' dilemma as a king. However, Oedipus has no doubts about his obligations as a king. Medea is tormented by the conflict of her offended dignity as a woman and her sacred duty as a mother. Pizarro has terrible ethical questions, besides his metaphysical broodings: to set Atahuallpa free or not. Yonadab and Salieri have no scrupulousness; they represent the practical cynicism of contemporary life; something must be done and it is done: Mozart's life and Amnon's life are no obstacles to it. Ethics is puzzling in **Amadeus** and **Yonadab**, in which human vices are portrayed. It is also very problematic in **Medea**, who kills her opponent, the father of her opponent, her own two children, and escapes unpunished, and apparently saved by divine intervention.

The theme of revenge is as fundamental in Euripides' **Medea** as it is in Shaffer's **Amadeus** and **Yonadab**. In **Medea** and **Yonadab**, vengeance is guaranteed by a feminine character that takes control of the situation and is confirmed by a deity. However, in **Yonadab**, similarly to **Medea**, Tamar's command does not alter the pattern of that masculine society, and Medea confirms the patriarchal foundations of her world—she is saved by a male god. In both the Greeks and in Shaffer we can talk of a tradition being developed, altered, questioned, but always finally redeemed and justified, never entirely denied. In **Yonadab** and **Amadeus** vengeance acquires a dimension that is much more metaphysical and exitential, involving the transcendent, the drives of the self, society, and the cosmos, so with more philosophical implications. Vengeance is not seen as a mere family problem, something personal or subjective. It is part of the human situation.

The conflict between love and death, *eros* and *thanatos*, so important in Greek tragedies like **Medea** and **Oedipus**, is also valuable for Shaffer—Amnon's complex and destructive passion for Tamar in **Yonadab**, Alan's frustrated sexual desire for Jill and Equus in **Equus**. However, balanced love alone is not a theme either in Shaffer or in the Greek plays analyzed. Instead love is accompanied by lust, vengeance and pride; it is killed by knowledge or power, and challenged by existence, time, and death. In fact, Shaffer's plays present human relations in profound tension, in competition for space and power, with characters trying to express their fears and desires. The same is visible in the Greek plays.

The fascination with what is mystical and the notion of the sacred are present in the Greek plays, although less evident in Euripides' **Medea**. In Shaffer the presence of the divinity is also fundamental. The religious concerns conceal or are mixed with political tensions, social operations, domineering relationships, and authoritarian and violent acts. Shaffer's plays seem to show the ruins of the Judeo-Christian framework. Christianity lies in the background of **The Royal Hunt, Equus** and **Amadeus**. This criticism on the validity of religious institutions is also present in Euripides. Faith seems to be something impossible to reach, idealism is dead, and innocence is not possible anymore, so that what remains is the exterior habit, the empty gesture. In **Equus**, the Christian elements are mixed with pagan allusions, and in **Yonadab** the Jewish tradition is mixed with Egyptian myths, conveying the impression of a generalized decadence. In **Amadeus** and **Yonadab** the transcendent seems to be always on the threshold of the immanent, menacing to intervene. The presence of Equus seems strangely real in Alan's religious visions and in Dysart's most terrible nightmares. In **The Royal Hunt**, before Atahuallpa Pizzaro seems ready to abandon Christianity and accept the possibility of Atahuallpa's divinity. Yonadab seems to go through a similar experience in relation to Absalom and Tamar. However, the experience of the supernatural is limited to the subjective, psychological level of the individual—Pizarro, Alan, Salieri, and Yonadab. Nevertheless, the divine seems extremely real.

In **Equus, The Royal Hunt** and **Yonadab**, the contrast of a dead religious experience with a passionate, subjective, intuitive religiosity is evident, usually according to the perspective of a skeptical narrator. Alan's subjective mystical dream becomes objective by Dysart's interpretation. Alan's intense passion is explained in terms of pathology, his Equus god is just the hallucination of a mad young man. Yonadab seems to convey the same experience of disillusionment: Tamar's objectivity destroys his dreams. Thus the religious crisis takes place inside the individual, but there are social and political implications, in all the four plays. Shaffer's universe is theocentric, although God is questioned, seen as distant, absent and silent, accused of being tyrannical and unjust, and even denied.

Shaffer's plays seem tragedies of disenchantment. Christianity is referred to, but never accepted as a truthful, authentic value. There is no real redemption, just disillusion. The characters survive, yet in a very lamentable condition, like Pizarro after Atahuallpa's death, Alan after Dysart's treatment, like Yonadab, cursed for eternity to be a watcher, or like Salieri, incompetent even to kill himself. Shaffer's heroes are all condemned: Yonadab is condemned to

be a voyeur, Salieri to be a mediocre, Alan to be a normal man without passion, and Pizzaro is condemned to be a man marked by the illusion of immortality.

In fact, Shaffer offers a dialectical view of the human religious experience. His attitude towards the sacred is iconoclastic, almost blasphemous, certainly daring, since he questions dogmas. The sacred is confirmed, since the hero who questions God's authority is destroyed, but it brings neither joy nor redemption, like in **Yonadab** and **The Royal Hunt**. Only in **Equus** is the sacred defeated, but its presence remains as a permanent menace in the shadows of the human mind. Pizarro could stand for Shaffer, a post-Christian who misses the transcendent. In fact, Shaffer as a contemporary tragic dramatist works in the twilight of the great myths, the great gods, the great narratives, expressing his sense of disillusionment, but always tempted to come back to mysticism, always fascinated with the mystery of faith.[143] Indeed the theme of man fighting God is fundamental in Shaffer as a tragedian as it is one of the basic recurrences in tragedy in general—man in conflict with a situation, the general order usually implying some sort of god, justice, or moral value (Bornheim 97). Because of his preoccupation with the transcendent, Shaffer's plays maintain their theological framework and are a target of great attack by his contemporaries for whom the religious problem is completely outdated. Shaffer recognizes the impossibility of faith, but laments its loss, and recognizes the limitations of a life marked by incredulity and cynicism.

In terms of visual and aural devices, there is a great similarity between Shaffer and the Greeks: the view of theatre as spectacle, and even the use of a complex machinery, while the differences are due to technological limitations only. Shaffer has much more technical support to create and experiment with light and sound. The Greek plays were presented under the daylight and therefore were very limited in terms of exploration of artificial light, although some sort of light device was used at that time, like shaking torches to produce lightning. The sound of thunderstorms was produced by an instrument called *brontáion*, composed of pebbles thrown at pieces of iron (Brandão **Teatro Grego: Origem e Evolução** 114).

Shaffer's use of light and sound is controlled by his dramatic purposes, thus enhancing the focus of the play. In **Equus**, for example, the use of a tape-recorder emphasizes the presence of electronics mediating the human relations and bringing new information to the play, and the

[143] In fact, Shaffer's craving for the recovery of myths and his observation that modern times lack mythical depth seem to allude to some ideas of Nietzsche, a recognition that "[t]he decline of tragedy was also the decline of myth" (Nietzsche 111).

spotlight helps to center the attention on the characters involved in the scenes. In **The Royal Hunt**, light and voices are also simultaneously used to trigger emotions, create an atmosphere, and focus on the major conflict. The Greek plays analyzed also present technological devices being used for dramatic purposes, like Prometheus' descent into the underworld and Medea's final escape from Corinth. Shaffer uses cinematic projections on the stage in **Equus**, placing the language of the cinema into the theatre. Pure image, through the projection of light and color, is used to compose with the scenery and interact with the actors on stage.

Another device used by Shaffer, which has some points of contact with the Greek plays, is the voice-off, something seen in **Medea,** in the violent scene of the killing of the children, and in **Oedipus,** in the scene of the self-blinding. Shaffer uses actors in frozen positions, while voices are heard, in **Equus** and **Yonadab**. There are abundant indications about the use of light in Shaffer's plays, which contributes to deepen the impact of the scenes and help characterization. Shaffer contrasts nuances of colors like red and golden in **The Royal Hunt,** symbols of blood and of the sun; blue and darkness stand for night in **Amadeus**; there is the contrast of brightness and darkness in **Equus**, and the contrast of white curtains and red blood in **Yonadab**. Several sounds are used in Shaffer's plays to convey the idea of bad omens: cries of birds, screams, earthquakes, drum beats, classical music, and songs, in **Equus**, **Yonadab**, and **Amadeus**. Shaffer even suggests and defines the musical scores of the plays, like in **Yonadab**. In fact, Shaffer himself admits his emphasis on visual and aural resources which help him to move the play away from the mere word centralization. In **Yonadab**, in the scene after Tamar's rape, when she is walking through the streets of Jerusalem, Shaffer uses an interesting device—the actress mimics the act of screaming while a recorded scream sounds off-stage, a scene alluding maybe to Brecht's **Mother Courage** or maybe to Edvard Munch's picture in oil "The Scream."[144]

As in the Greek plays in which many props are used to help enactment—ropes, curtains, cups, wreaths, brooches, hooks, chains, coaches, dresses—, in Shaffer, many objects are employed, like the tape-recorder in **Equus**, the sword, the garrote and the shield in **The Royal Hunt**, the piano, the table, the chandelier, the razor and the wheelchair in **Amadeus**, the curtain, bread and wine, the tower and the stone walls in **Yonadab**. These several objects help to recreate the environment of the play. The use of modern machinery available to enhance the scenic force

[144] For some critics, the scene of Mother Courage's cry is full of tragic significance. In fact, "[i]n George Steiner's **The Death of Tragedy** (1961), the concluding pages suggest that tragedy has died to be reborn [like in Nietzsche?]—in, for example, the silent scream of Mother Courage in Brecht's play" (Leech 80).

of the plays—light, cinema projections, music, recorded voices and sounds, and also the rich decoration of the stage with curtains, benches, doors— and the introduction of many innovations seem to connect Shaffer with Erwing Piscator's (1893-1966) theatrical experiences. In plays like **The Royal Hunt**, for instance, the visual and aural devices create and maintain an epic atmosphere. In all the four plays,the use of cinematic devices or his intelligent handling of light to structure the montage and focus on the sequence of scenes reveal Shaffer's versatility.

Although Shaffer's spectacular plays could be seen by some critics as audacious and pretentious, his interviews and commentaries on his own art reveal an honest and humble attitude. He does not hide his influences, his several sources, the origin of his ideas, considering himself an adapter, a translator of historical, mythological, and journalistic narratives. And this links him with the Greek tragedians, who worked with narratives of the past, without worrying about originality. He also gives the proper credit to the directors of his plays, as well as the musicians, costume designers, illuminators and sound engineers. Thus when he faced the failure of **Shrivings**, he confessed his frustration and depression, and soon started to edit and rewrite it. Thus Shaffer is conscious about his art. He knows he is an artisan, not a passionate, inspired, romantic writer. He is a builder, a constructor of theatre who has a clear aim: to touch the audience in their ears and eyes, brain and heart. More than an original creator, he is indeed a maker of patchworks, of collage, developing ideas rather than creating original ones. It is part of his project as a playwright, being a craftsman of the theatre and not merely a literary writer or theorist, although his plays have sound, clear, and strong theoretical foundations.

The scenery of the Greek plays can be inferred from the architecture of the amphitheatres and from the play-texts—the Palace in which Oedipus lives with Jocasta, Medea's house, the rock to which Prometheus is bound in the middle of the ocean. Although we do not have plenty of information, we can deduce what the productions were like, considering the richness of Greek culture, the wide space of the Greek stage, and the many drawings and graphics preserved on vases and walls. In this particular aspect, Shaffer's plays present a spectacular richness. In **The Royal Hunt** there is a profusion of colors, ladders, and golden decoration, while in **Equus** simplicity and economy are seen in the row of benches, and in the predominance of white and black. Each of Shaffer's plays presents a scenery composed of a peculiar texture: gold, metal and stone in **The Royal Hunt**, wood and leather in **Equus**, velvet and satin in **Amadeus**, curtains and stones in **Yonadab**, each one suitable for their setting.

With Peter Shaffer, as well as with the Greeks, the stage is occupied with both symbolic and realistic items—real cups, real chairs, symbolic stabs, symbolic mountains, real swords, imaginary pricks. Everyday objects of a house, such as furniture and curtains, are mixed with phallic towers and menacing stones in **Yonadab**, instruments of torture with horse apparatus in **Equus**, golden objects, bright as the sun, with blood red in **The Royal Hunt**. Scenery is very realistic in **Amadeus**, mixed with projections on a screen and the representation of simultaneous places, while in **Yonadab** it is basically a contrast of curtains and stones, towers suspended by ropes, used in some scenes, and the written text of the Torah on the background. Allusions to written texts abound in **Yonadab**—the body of Amnon and Tamar forming Hebrew letters, quotations from the Torah, a probable allusion to the Biblical passage in which Yaveh writes on the walls of the palace. In **Yonadab**, the written text—language— is like a curtain that hinders the vision, hiding and revealing at the same time, just like Yonadab uses words: to dissimulate and prepare his vengeance, in a game of meanings and impressions. The hieroglyphs in **Yonadab** also suggest sensuality, the temptation to return to the Egyptian culture, the fascination with idolatry, and the fear of apostasy. Hieroglyphs are also important because of their relation with the alphabet, and are generally linked with the notion of enigma (Cirlot 300). In **Oedipus**, language appears as an oracle, not in its written form, but as an ambiguous advice given by the gods, a riddle which the hero is challenged to decipher. Oedipus learns how language can become a barrier. The riddle is also found in Shaffer's **Equus** and **Yonadab**. The allusion to the written text is perceived in **Amadeus**, since the written works by Mozart are handled by Salieri. In **The Royal Hunt** the reference to language as a written code is seen in the scene in which Atahuallpa's nails are painted, besides other references to the Holy Scriptures, and to Atahuallpa's and Pizarro's illiteracy.

The plays selected present an interesting use of food on stage. In **Oedipus**, Jocasta is seen bringing offerings—meals—to the gods; the context is a religious sacrifice. In **The Royal Hunt** Atahuallpa is also seen having his meal in a style that conveys a sense of sanctity. In **Amadeus**, Salieri's gluttony becomes evident in his voracity for sweets and candies; here food contributes to the psychological profile of the narrator. In **Yonadab**, the narrator emphasizes the lack of taste of the Jewish culture, the lack of variety in their meals, and the poor food of Jerusalem; food seems to represent an entire nation and the rejection of its values and customs. In the same play, food is present in the confraternization of David's family, and, what is most important, in Tamar's seductive visit to Amnon; her cake has a good smell and carries an erotic force, as well as a

religious and therapeutic one. In **Equus**, Alan puts something in his mouth, when he is riding Equus, something he calls "mambit" and which seems to be an erotic allusion, with a ritualistic significance, but being in fact a symbol of pain and pleasure, with a clear sadomasochistic inspiration.

The Royal Hunt presents different locations, the Old and the New World, the Inca Empire being discovered and explored by the Spanish, including forests and cities as scenery. Thus the setting demands changes of scenery, and Shaffer handles very well the occupation of the inner and the outer stages, sometimes using these different levels simultaneously. The same happens in **Equus** and in **Amadeus**. So scenery is dynamic, flexible and constantly altered. In **Yonadab** the most used and presented locations are the bedroom, the living room, the palace and the streets of Jerusalem. In **Amadeus,** the setting portrayed is the apartments and salons of Vienna. In **Equus,** the setting is the stable at night, a hospital, the Strang home and Dr. Dysart's office. The Greek plays, on the other hand, seem to be restricted to open air scenes—Prometheus on the rocks in the middle of the sea, the courtyard, the gates to Oedipus' palace, the front door of Jason's house, thus contrasting with Shaffer's usually closed, private spaces, although there are many external scenes in **The Royal Hunt**—the walking through the mountains, the fighting on the streets—, in **Equus** there are the night rides, and in **Yonadab** Tamar is seen walking through the streets of Jerusalem.

The contrast between luxury and misery is evident in the setting of **The Royal Hunt**—the decadent city in Europe, the gold empire of the Indians, the fearful shadows of the forest, the Spanish soldiers in rags. In **Yonadab,** the severe environment of Jerusalem conveys the stone empire of Israel, a rough place, sterile and tasteless. In **Amadeus,** the richness and vanity of the court members contrast with Mozart's weird appearance and poverty at the very end. The luxury of the salons contrasts with Salieri's poor end. In fact, each play by Shaffer recreates different worlds: an ancient civilization in South America, the English countryside, eighteenth century Vienna, and the biblical site of Jerusalem. Indeed all these settings suggest a removal from London in time and space. Shaffer is doing what the Greeks did, giving to their plays a certain distance from the current time and culture, keeping distance in order to affect, convince, and disturb the audience.[145] Thus Prometheus is confined to a rock in the middle of the sea, Oedipus

[145] Even among the Greek tragedians, great care is taken in providing for distance in time, distance from quotidian life. Even living in times of democracy, they preferred to have kings as their protagonists (Schüler 92).

comes from Corinth, and Medea is a Colchian princess living in Corinth. In Shaffer's plays it is also possible to observe a certain polarization in terms of space: the Spanish Empire versus the Inca Empire, Mozart's room versus Salieri's room, Amnon's house versus David's house, Alan's stable and Dr. Dysart's office.

Costumes were important for the Greeks as they are for Shaffer and, although there is not so much information about the kind of costumes worn by the actors in the Greek theatre, there are important paintings discovered and studied by archeologists. Both the Greeks and Shaffer use rich and varied costumes to convey the personality and the social status of the characters, as well as their states of mind and their spiritual condition. Costumes also determine the kind of representation, sometimes more realistic, sometimes more symbolic, and sometimes creating a contrast. In **Equus**, for example, Dysart and Alan's clothes are prosaic, common, but the horses are totally stylized, wearing masks. In Shaffer, costumes are especially important to characterize an age and a cultural environment. The historical and geographical distance also gives Shaffer the opportunity to explore a variety of beautiful costumes— the exotic dresses of the Indians, the biblical characters in old Jerusalem, the exuberant dresses of the inhabitants of Vienna in eighteenth century. The Greek tragedians, considering the mythological origin of their characters and themes, also had cultural and historical differences to explore: the native Athenian, the foreigner, the noble man, the slave, the maiden, the messenger, and the priest. Besides, they have the spectacular and voluminous presence of the Chorus appropriately dressed. Going beyond the Greeks, whose tragedies explore all the variety of costumes, rich and poor, Shaffer explores even the human naked body. Scenes of nudity are presented in **Equus** and **Yonadab**, enhancing their erotic force and calling attention to the lack of costumes. Oedipus' decadence is shown by his clothes stained with blood as his eyes are bleeding; Mozart's final decadence is also conveyed through costumes, and through his physical appearance, wearing a poor rotten dress and a cloak.

Masks are also an important device both for the Greeks and for Shaffer. In **Equus**, the masks worn by the horses are particularly important and recurring, simultaneously hiding and showing the heads of the actors. In his dreams, Dr. Dysart also wears a mask which slides, revealing his linkage with classical antiquity and his terrible fears of being the priest of an insane ritual. Indeed, it becomes evident in the Greek tragedy as well as in Shaffer's plays that the mask

contains a certain emanation, a certain special aura of the supernatural, of the mythical.[146] In **Amadeus,** Salieri wears a mask, impersonating the terrible figure of Death who comes to torment Mozart. In **The Royal Hunt,** the Indian priests wear great golden masks. In fact, Shaffer is conscious of the Greeks' use of masks in the theatre and rehabilitates their usage, breaking with crude naturalism and realism, renewing the theatre, promoting a revival of past experiments, a recreation of old conventions, thus recapturing the magic of the mask on the stage. In fact, Shaffer mixes contemporary elements, problems, themes and language with some Greek theatrical conventions, like the masks, the Chorus, and the spectacle.

Greek tragedy, as illustrated by **Oedipus,** is an insistent unmasking of the human being. Post-modern civilization plays the game of masking and unmasking social rules, individuality, ideological forces and movements. Theatre, for the Greeks as well as for the moderns, implies the ambiguity of masking and unmasking reality, veiling and unveiling the human personality. Therefore, in a very subtle way, Tamar's dissimulation, as well as Yonadab's and Salieri's, are also forms of mask, of masquerading real intentions and human relations. To a certain extent, the wigs worn by the characters in **Amadeus,** besides conveying the environment, the values of that society, also stand for the Greek mask; they are taken off and put on at special moments by Salieri, and are part of characterization. According to the **Dicionário de Símbolos,** masks usually connote some sort of transformation and initiation (Cirlot 374-5), and it is exactly what Shaffer's plays are about, rites of initiation, dramas of personal transformation like chrysalises, although in a negative sense in relation to Alan, Young Martin, Yonadab and Salieri; their transformation implies decadence and not evolution, ruin and not richness, death and not life. Shaffer's use of masks also evinces the similarity of his notion of *mimesis* with that of the Greeks, their shared preference for the stylized and symbolic representation of reality.

Another important point of connection between Shaffer and the Greek dramatists lies in the richness of gesture, in the emphasis on choreographic movements. Theatre is made not only of words, but of physical, dynamic gestures. There are some gestures which are recurring in Shaffer, and which are also common in the Greek plays: kneeling, prostrating oneself, adoring are always present in Alan's relation with Equus, in Pizarro's relation with Atahuallpa, in King David's family, while Yonadab, characterized by his pride, refuses to kneel and adore David and

[146] Shaffer's plays represent serious attempts to recreate a tragic sense of reality. He seems to confirm Steiner's perception that "the decline of tragedy is inseparably related to the decline of the organic world view and of its attendant context of mythological, symbolic and ritual reference" (Steiner 292).

his power. Salieri also kneels, but in a fit of envy, when he listens to Mozart's music. In trance, Mozart kneels, and so does King David. Salieri's final scene is interesting also because of its irony. By attempting suicide, cutting his own throat, Salieri falls down, but as his attempt does not succeed, he stands up again, humiliated. By doing so, he breaks with the seriousness of the death scene, and acts like a puppet; he shatters and derides the tragic ritual of a suicide. He could be seen as the denial of a tragic noble end, but in fact he conveys a still deeper despair, the despair of not being able even to die. **Yonadab** seems to wander between the two opposite positions, being too ironical and critical, cynical in fact, and being serious and fearing violence and death, being skeptical and a believer, kneeling without praying. Shaffer's theatre is essentially ironical and pessimistic, and most pessimistic when most ironical.

Ritual represents another connection between Shaffer and the Greeks. In a certain way, ritual is precisely determined and controlled by choreographic gestures, like the group of suppliants in the opening scene of **Oedipus**. Ritual usually implies the performance of some pre-established restricted behavior, full of significance but beyond the limits of words. It is usually pregnant with symbolic meaning and cultural information. In Greek tragedies rituals are usually civic and religious; the same can be seen in Shaffer's plays, as in the Spanish mass in **The Royal Hunt**, the confession Atahuallpa offered to Pizarro, the funeral offered to Atahuallpa, Alan's religious ecstasy, Salieri's "pastiche" of the holy communion in **Amadeus**. Even Tamar's rape is ritualized and presented as a religious sacrifice with several references to legends, gods, idols and myths.

Ritual also imphes the invocation and the presence of a deity, the separation of the universe between what is sacred and what is not. It implies faith but it is also an esthetic experience—beauty, harmony, rhythm and incantation are somehow implied. Priesthood is present in the Greek universe, in **Oedipus**, **Medea**, and **Prometheus**. In Shaffer's plays, we find the presence, the allusion, or even the need of a priest in Atahuallpa's court in **The Royal Hunt**, in Tamar's performances and behaviour in **Yonadab**, in Dysart's and Alan's dreams and conflicts in **Equus**, and in Salieri's and Mozart's lives—Salieri wants to be God's sole representative, but he is only the man capable to grasp Mozart's sacerdotal mission, and all he can be is the saint patron of the mediocre among the audience, among the ghosts of the future. Mozart's music makes the bridge between Salieri and God and breaks it.

The idea of sacrifice is very strong in Shaffer's plays under analysis. It includes the scapegoat element, i. e., the victim who dies on the altar to placate God's wrath, sometimes

society's. Atahuallpa's death is sacrificial, although pointless since it brings no salvation to the Inca people or to Pizarro. Alan's spiritual death is sacrificial, all his devotion to Equus must be sacrificed—he is the priest and the victim of his own ritual. Dysart also believes to perform priestly functions, in his dreams of being a tormented priest in an ancient human ritual. Tamar's vengeance receives sacrificial traits; she orders Amnon's death in order to keep the country clean from sinful deeds. Mozart is the scapegoat of Salieri's envy, and Salieri intends and pretends to be a priest, mediating peoples' relation with God.[147]

In Shaffer's plays sacrifices usually hide violent and repressive forces. Somebody is angry, somebody is hurt, somebody performs the ritual, and nobody is saved. This is Shaffer's view of ritual. In Sophocles' **Oedipus**, the hero's suffering redeems the city, stops the plague, pacifies the wrath of the gods. In **Prometheus**, the hero's sacrifice restores the order of power, although the space is open to a future upheaval. In fact, sacrificial rituals in Shaffer's plays, as well as in the Greek ones, suggest a paradigm of order and disorder, the alteration and the restoration of normality in social life. This is evident in plays like **The Royal Hunt**, although the order restored there is totally decadent and provisional, and in **Equus** the restoration of normality implies a fearful act. In **Yonadab** the crisis in the house of David is ended through violence. However, a criminal, malignant order seems strangely confirmed in **Amadeus**, although God guarantees Mozart's restoration and Saheri's progressive punishment.

In Shaffer's plays, as in the Greek tragedies, ritual includes prayers and songs, just as in **Amadeus**, **The Royal Hunt** and **Yonadab**. There are moments of contrition like in Pizarro's prostration before Atahuallpa, Mozart's collapse in Constanze's arms, Pizarro's ritualized confession before Atahuallpa in **The Royal Hunt**, Salieri's formal confession before the audience, Alan's religious ecstasy, Tamar's dance at the beginning and at the end of **Yonadab**, Tamar's quotations from the Scriptures, David's song, Tamar's song, and Atahuallpa's song of the little finch repeated by Pizarro. Shaffer also includes pagan ceremonies in **The Royal Hunt** (Atahuallpa), in **Equus** (Alan), and in **Yonadab** (Yonadab and Absalom). Prayers, religious songs, quotations from the oracles, and libations are similarly present in the Greek plays. Greek tragedy includes and plays with some religious elements, mainly through the Chorus, which

[147] "In rational terms, we know that no man's death purges us, but, in so far as we sense that a vicarious purging gives us relief, we rebel against it. For a moment we may accept the scapegoat-ritual, but in our hearts we feel shame at our acceptance. The ultimate effect of tragedy is to sharpen our feeling of responsibility, to make us more fully aware that we have erred as the tragic figures have erred (whether they be many or one in the play we see)" (Leech 54).

always invokes the intervention of the gods. This is usually done with music and dance, elements which the Greeks valued and Shaffer preserves. In **Amadeus**, music and dance become more than components, they are the very essence of the play.

Theatre as ritual is the celebration of the mystery and precariousness of human life. Shaffer tries to recover this element from the Greek tragedy and revitalize it in post-modern society, although with a meaningful difference—ritual now is not intended to encompass either the totality of the human experience or the totality of the human society. Rituals are in a way turned psychological, subjective and individualistic, like in **Equus**, since society has lost its unity. In **Amadeus**, Salieri tries to become the mediator of a new fake ritual, the fake priest of a fake unity, the unity of mediocrity. Besides, there are some funerals in Shaffer's plays, many spectacular retinues, entrances, exits, soldiers marching, parades, masses, feasts, dance and music. Thus the environment of the plays is full of religious and civic rituals, but without their original power and meaning, since they are limited by cynicism, automation, and skepticism.

Having seen the most important links between Shaffer and the Greek dramatists in terms of theatrical devices, comes now the moment to analyze the plays according to their relation to Aristotle's basic terms and principles.

Shaffer's notion of *mimesis* seems to fit the Greek tragedians' notion of representation, of re-elaboration of myths and old known narratives, the idea present in Aristotle. Shaffer uses a great variety of sources: historical narratives, biblical narratives, newspaper notes. He presents different views of the world, different environments, different languages and cultural frames in each play. These worlds are exposed through terms and concepts extracted from psychoanalysis, history, exitentialism, theology, mythology, and many allusions to everyday life. Shaffer proposes an alternative reading of the past, altering the character of the historical figure of Pizarro, for example, endowing him with existential preoccupations, and making him more conscious, skeptical and cynical than he probably was at the time; or choosing to retell the popular version of Mozart as an immature, vulgar, unconscious and irresponsible genius, and of Salieri as a cynical, unscrupulous man; or even transforming King David into a tyrant, negligent king, Tamar into a scheming, manipulating vulgar young woman, and Yonadab into a smart, cowardly cynic. The past becomes a heritage that serves the author's esthetical and critical sovereign intentions.

Shaffer's notion of *mimesis* also includes the criticism of contemporary society, by exposing the values and the crises of post-modern man. His plays establish a link between the

Greek tradition and the present time. Through the esthetical and historical distancing of his plays he achieves the necessary objectivity to focus on contemporary matters, like the loss of faith, the lack of passion, the need of a new mythological framework, the decadence of the religious foundations, and the crisis of institutions, of subjectivity, and of the individual.[148] Although in terms of approach he seems to propose a very traditional form of theatre, a return to the classical patterns, in terms of subjects, themes, attitudes, and ideas, he is totally up-to-date. His treatment of the crisis of the hero (protagonists like Yonadab, Dysart, and Pizarro are in crisis and want some sort of faith experience, although they feel unable to accomplish it), reveals the mentality and the sufferings of the common man who presently witnesses the crisis of democracy, the crisis of history, the crisis of science, the ruin of the great narratives, and the lack of passion and faith. Thus, Shaffer prefers the historical account, the unusual case, the biblical narrative that provide distance in time, in order to reach credibility and tragic depth. The narratives of the past are invoked to provide a better understanding of the life of the individual in the present world.

However, some of Shaffer's critics like Benedict Nightingale (*apud* Cooke & Page 28), Constantine Gianakaris (**Peter Shaffer** 129), and Michael Billington (*apud* Cooke & Page **File on Shaffer** 77), think that his obsession with metaphysical themes, with the existence of God and with the problem of faith are outmoded, and therefore out of the mainstream of the contemporary cultural discussion, which centers around political, ideological, and social subjects. In fact, he has metaphysical concerns; they appear in all the plays analyzed, but with different nuances, and mixed with the criticism of culture, society, institutions, and history. He is not a naïve pretentious immature writer, but a very experienced and self-conscious worker of the drama. Like the Greek tragedies, Shaffer's plays are much more richly understood and grasped under a historical perspective, as illustrations of the conflicts and tribulations of the present time. Although the plays are historical in their subject, the audience he has in mind, his sharp consciousness of language, and the mentality he portrays are all extremely contemporary, post-modern. Even when the narrator belongs to the past—Old Martin, Salieri, and Yonadab—, the language used, the mentality presupposed, and the audience addessed are in the present time. In mind and in personality, all Shaffer's narrators belong to our century—they are all victims of materialism, irony, and tormented by a keen sense of crisis. So, although the images concern a past world, the

[148] "O problema fundamental da tragédia em nossos dias não apresenta novidade: qual é a medida do homem?" (Bornheim 115-6).

problems, the mentality and the treatment reflect a contemporary experience: anguish and uncertainty, skepticism and need of values, isolation and need of communion.[149]

Shaffer recognizes the influence of Bertolt Brecht and his "epic drama" (Rosenfeld 152). He also recognizes the influence of the Greek, the medieval, and the Chinese theatres which are characterized by conveying a sense of estrangement, by triggering a critical relation with the world of the play. Thus Shaffer, following Brecht's route, does not aim at the illusion of reality in drama, the mere naturahsm, instead he prefers a more critical, ironical, and conscious attitude. Nevertheless, his plays are fascinating and involving spectacles, just as Brecht's.[150]

Anyway, Shaffer's notion of *mimesis* is clearly established in terms of representation, aligned with the Greeks'. In Shaffer there is a complicating element: the narrator is usually split in two different moments of his life—Old Martin and Young Martin are double representations of the same character; a young Salieri and an old Salieri share the stage; and Dysart goes through a fierce dilemma while Alan's life is revisited. But the most ambiguous narrator is Yonadab, who is antagonized and maybe supplanted by the presence of Tamar. As Shaffer's narrators address directly the audience, the illusion of reality is lost and there is a substantial gain in terms of communication, identification and consciousness. Differently from Brecht's notion of "epic theatre" and its search for estrangement, Shaffer is not very much concerned, or not only concerned, with the perfecting of the historical, ideological, and political consciousness, or with the comprehension of social processes, he is much more concerned with deeper existential and metaphysical conflicts,[151] not with history but with the human condition, not so much with the history of collectivity but with the individual existence. Yet Shaffer's metaphysical preoccupation does not neutralize the poignant power of his criticism of contemporary society

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[149] Tragedy seems to bloom just in a very hostile environment: "Where a tragic conception of life is in force, moreover, there can be no recourse to secular or material remedies.... [the tragic dilemas are] woven into the heart of life. Tragedy would have us know that there is in the very fact of human existence a provocation or paradox; it tells us that the purposes of men sometimes run against the grain of inexplicable and destructive forces that lie 'outside' yet very close" (Steiner 128).

[150] According to Martin Esslin, "Brecht's theatre therefore is anti-illusionist, that is, no effort is made to create an illusion of reality. Instead the stage becomes something of a lecture platform, a laboratory in which models of human behaviour are examined, tested and evaluated. *But, of course, Brecht was also a very great poet. That fact, rather than his theories, fascinating and stimulating though they are, is the secret of his success as a playwright*" (**Anatomy** 65, italics mine).

[151] "In overall terms, Yonadab is one of Shaffer's familiar god-seekers, and the play a forum for speculation on metaphysical questions. Like Salieri in **Amadeus** and Dysart in **Equus**, Yonadab is both narrator and participant, and opens the play by addressing the audience directly as master of ceremonies. He speaks to us from his vantage point in the distant past, in this case a pre-Christian era, to offer his account of events in his day. As narrator he can freeze action on the stage to comment on it; as a player in the story he frequently turns aside from the audience to enter the illusion of the plot. Everything we see and hear is therefore mediated by him" (Gianakaris 129).

and its institutions and practices. This empliasis on the participation of the narrator may perhaps obfuscate his dialogues. A great amount of the text is dedicated to the narrator's contact with the audience. The asides by the narrator, full of irony and sometimes cynicism, break the illusion of reality in the play, or maybe suggest that all that we call reality is in fact mere fiction, thus recovering the Elizabethan notion of the world as a stage and of the audience as being composed of mere actors. Like the Greeks, Shaffer's plays debate the historical moment in which we live.

Shaffer's plays are very rich in symbolism, and that is another point of contact with the Greek plays. Some events, some details, some objects, and even characters can allude to something else and even recur in the plays. Among the symbolic elements we have dreams, which seem to suggest the transcending of reality, the possibility of contact with another level of reality, almost in the verge of ecstasy. The dream opens the door to the supernatural. Dreams are very important in the Greek culture, in the biblical world, and also in the psychoanalytical practice. They reveal the divine and the human unconscious. In **The Royal Hunt** the supernatural appears in Atahuallpa's pose as immortal and in Pizarro's necessity to believe; in **Equus** it has to do with myth invading and fertilizing reality; in **Amadeus** and **Yonadab** it has to do with God's intervention and with the many allusions to ancient legends. In Shaffer's plays, dreams are recurrent and always followed by the narrator's commentary, interpreting or justifying them. In Shaffer's **Yonadab** and **The Royal Hunt**, and in Aeschylus' **Prometheus** and Sophocles' **Oedipus** dreams have the character of omens. In **Equus** they perform the function of revealing unconscious forces. In **Amadeus**, dreams are also responsible for the atmosphere of mystery and premonition.

In **The Royal Hunt** there is a scene in which a rope links Pizarro to Atahuallpa, binding two central figures who represent two empires, two different views of the world and two sides of the same reality. The rope can suggest how Pizarro's destiny is linked with Atahuallpa's. Yet, the rope can be easily destroyed, and it is, like the word Pizarro gives, like Atahuallpa's life, like Pizarro's faith. In contrast, Prometheus is bound in chains, which are stronger links demanding divine interference to be broken. And there is also the symbol of the bird that announces bad omens. According to the **Dicionário de Símbolos**, the rope usually means connection (Cirlot 181), and the bird usually suggests spirituality (446). In **Equus**, there is the fundamental symbol of the horses, implying force, deity, transcendence, sexuality, intuition and passion. To a certain extent, the presence of the horses, enacted by actors wearing masks, seems to question humanity—what kind of animal is man? In **Yonadab** there is a great contrast between curtains

and stones, as if they suggested two different kinds of reality. In the Bible, curtains suggest a symbolic separation, like the veil of the temple in the Old Testament, which separates man from God, and which is torn in two in the moment of Jesus' death, a redemptive passage. Oedipus, blind and bloody, comes through the curtains and returns to the stage as a living sacrifice. Yonadab, by contrast, experiments no expiation when the curtain comes down. The vicarious experience is reduced to a voyeuristic frustrating suspense. There is also the symbol of the bull, characterizing Amnon's uncontrollable lust, his force, and his physical power, rude and simple like an animal. The bull usually symbolizes the penetration of the feminine principle by the masculine, usually related to the notion of fertility (**Dicionário de Símbolos** 575). As a contrast, Absalom is portrayed as a shining sun, full of light and brightness, just like Atahuallpa is portrayed in whiteness, which afterwards becomes bloody redness. The color red also occurs in **Equus**, in the scene of the piercing of the horses, a clear reminiscence of Oedipus. Salieri and Yonadab could be well symbolized by an animal: the fox. In **Amadeus**, the symbol of the manuscript is present, suggesting the sacred work of a genius, a man chosen by God, inspired.

Many images and symbols in Shaffer's plays have erotic implications and phallic suggestions: like the horses in **Equus**, Salieri's lust and gluttony in **Amadeus**, rape and lust, curtains, nakedness and voyeurism in **Yonadab**. The towers of Jerusalem in **Yonadab** also have erotic connotations. The same could be said concerning the many references to the senses, like the smell of food in Tamar's cooking, allusions to taste in Atahuallpa's dinner, in Salieri's candies and "sorbeti," and to its absence in the meals of Jerusalem, according to Yonadab. Eroticism, however, seems to be absent from the Greek tragedies under analysis.

Taboos are dealt with in Shaffer's plays, some of them with extreme vulgarity. In **Yonadab** incest becomes the central event determining the relationship between Tamar and Amnon and between Tamar and Absalom. Indeed, incest is seen as a taboo because it implies the union of equals. In Jung's words, it implies the desire of union with the essence of one's own self (*apud* Cirlot 313). Taboo is also dealt with by Sophocles in **Oedipus**, and by Euripides in **Medea**. In **The Royal Hunt**, Atahuallpa's presumption of divinity is overtly exposed. In **Equus** the erotic and the heretic are exposed in Alan's cult of Equus. Salieri is the saint of the mediocre, an ironic blasphemer, and Yonadab is cursed to be a voyeur, with all the erotic and heretical allusions the word has. Vulgarity in the treatment of God is amazing in Pizarro (**The Royal Hunt**), in Salieri (**Amadeus**), and in Yonadab and David (**Yonadab**). A certain link can be established with Oedipus' arrogance in relation to Apollo's oracle and with Medea's inconsiderate insolent

despise for divine revelations. Human affection, without sexual implications, is also present in each of Shaffer's plays analyzed, although in rarer and sometimes ambiguous moments—like between Pizarro and Atahuallpa, Dysart and Alan, Mozart and Constanze. But it is very difficult to observe it in **Yonadab**, in which there is no tenderness, only bitterness, indifference, zeal, and faith.

In **Amadeus**, the figure of Death walks by the night before Mozart's house in order to haunt him. This figure represents the menace of death. Death moves around Atahuallpa and Pizarro, a man obsessed with the mystery of Time and Death. Dysart and Alan die spiritually. Salieri is himself a phantom and attempts suicide, being finally condemned to survive in execration. Yonadab sees and comments on the stones and violence of Jerusalem, going through a conflict between the desire of faith and the experience of illusion. In **Yonadab**, Tamar is the character who walks by the streets of Jerusalem alone, after the rape. She is the symbol of abandonment and loneliness, the feminine victim of masculine violence, soon to become the very strong woman who will revenge David's house. Certainly, the last entrance of Oedipus on the stage, blind and bloody, is a touching image of abandonment and pain. The last scene of **Prometheus**, when the protagonist is thrown into the underworld conveys a vision of death as a permanent suffering under the shadows. The scene is terrible, however Prometheus cannot die really. And in **Medea**, the protagonist shows a strong natural repugnance to death, but for Medea the loss of dignity is worse than death.

The shadows of the night are another important image in Shaffer. Alan's rides occur at night. Salieri's anguish and memories happen at night. Mozart's dreams and visions of the figure of Death also take place at night. The killing of Atahuallpa is metaphorically compared to the killing of the sun, and the sun usually symbolizes the climax of heroic activity (Cirlot 534). Pizarro dreams of Atahuallpa every night (Shaffer **The Royal Hunt** 32). The rape of Tamar occurs at night, while her walk occurs at dawn. Yonadab's dreams also happen at night. The references to the shadows of the night are most visible in Sophocles' **Oedipus**, in which the blindness of Tiresias is compared to the most fundamental blindness of Oedipus. The moment of Oedipus' full revelation is ambiguously presented as a moment of intense light and terrible darkness. Indeed, there are many connections between **Equus** and **Oedipus**—Equus and the Sphinx, dreams and omens, the man as the problem, the riddle and the monster, vision and blindness.

Man being trapped by destiny is very important in the Greeks—Prometheus bound to the rocks, Oedipus unable to escape destiny—, and it is also evident in Shaffer's plays: Atahuallpa is arrested by Pizarro and finally killed; Yonadab is trapped by Tamar; Salieri traps Mozart, but is finally trapped into the hands of God; Dysart traps Alan and convinces him to open up. In spite of the presence of destiny, all the characters are free and move according to their own initiative, even in a very old myth of immobility like Prometheus.

Dancing, so important in **Yonadab**—in Tamar's dances—, and in **The Royal Hunt**—Pizarro's and Atahuallpa's dance—, or in the Chorus dance in the Greek tragedy, usually represents a process, the constant becoming movement of everything, the very act of creation (Cirlot 56). Because it suggests the creation of the world, dancing represents one of the most ancient forms of magic. Every dance is a pantomime and a metamorphosis.

Many instruments of torture and death are presented in Shaffer's plays: the prick in **Equus**, the sword and the garrote in **The Royal Hunt**, poison in **Amadeus,** and stones in **Yonadab**. They seem to symbolize the eternal declaration of war between God and man in Shaffer's plays; they are a sign of resistance, of conflict, denial and self-affirmation. They are fundamental in the Greek plays too, and most visible in **Prometheus** and **Oedipus**. Salieri's preference for metaphorically poisoning Mozart can be compared to Medea's actual choice for poisoning her opponents, and to Yonadab's option for subtlety and seduction, and to Tamar's cakes. In the Greek plays there are also instruments of torture and violence, most clearly in **Prometheus**, but also in **Oedipus** and **Medea**—the chain, the brooch, the sword, the poison.

The figure of the hero is a key element of comparison between Shaffer and the Greeks. There are many important points of similarity and many differences concerning this aspect. Although Prometheus and Oedipus fit Aristotle's principle of the hero as a noble man, not too perfect but virtuous and having good intentions, Medea seems to be out of place, being markedly passionate and destructive. Prometheus intends to help mankind, Oedipus intends to help the city of Corinth, but Medea is too much of a destructive character and intends to recover her lost dignity by ruining Jason's future and her own children. In fact, Shaffer's character Tamar seems to have some sort of identification with Euripides' Medea; both are women who are able to make plans of vengeance, both are considered witches, full of wit and cruelty, murderers of their own blood, and do not fit the traditional role of the virtuous character of the hero/heroine. They act in dissimulation, are seductive, their acts of vengeance are performed in a context of feast, and they

are confirmed by the gods. Tamar sacrifices her brother's life, Medea also sacrifices her brother's life to save Jason and finally sacrifices her children to destroy Jason's life.

In addition, Medea and Tamar portray a surprising transformation in the life of woman: from victims they become perpetrators of violence, from submissive creatures they become rulers, from victims they become executioners, going from innocence (at least the appearance of innocence) to murder. In Shaffer's **Yonadab**, the narrator Yonadab is first the author of some scheme of revenge against King David's family, but as the play moves on he becomes the victim of Tamar's obscure schemes and articulations. Indeed, Tamar takes hold of the play and for a moment rivals with Yonadab.

The fact is that Shaffer's heroes are so marked by human contradictions that it seems impossible to call them noble in the Aristotelian way. Indeed, there is no redemptive hero in Shaffer. They work as scapegoats, but they do not contribute to any positive, edifying intervention in society.[152] In this sense, Alan's spiritual death by conforming to the social notion of normality does not provide for the salvation of society. On the contrary, there is in the end a sense of despair and hopelessness. Dysart is the priest of this ritual, and at the same time, its victim and escapegoat, a reluctant priest performing an ineffective sacrifice. Salieri, although offering himself as an intercessor of the mediocre, is in fact a scapegoat who does not perform any expiatory action. His deeds are useless, even refused by society. His ironical pose as the saint of the mediocre emphasizes his incompetence as a hero, since a saint cannot provide any sort of spiritual connection without God's grace. As there is no sainthood, and no salvation, there would be therefore no *catharsis* for society, but only the reaffirmation of despair. However, as the audience identifies with the ambiguities of the protagonist, with the pain and fear involved, *catharsis* is still possible. Yonadab is also the scapegoat of Jerusalem, the eternal victim of David's curse, living to justify, with his protest, the present order in Israel. But Yonadab's dreams of creating and seeing the arrival of the kingdom of perpetual peace is totally ruined. With his forced sacrifice, all he can do is watch the prevailing of David's patriarchal, authoritarian order. Tamar, at first a victim, becomes really the priestess of a ritual of purification. Her vengeance is successful, just like Medea's was. In **The Royal Hunt** Atahuallpa's death also brings no salvation to the Inca nation and no fulfilment to Pizarro's vain expectancies of resurrection, to those who expect to overcome Time and Death.

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[152] In spite of that, Shaffer's plays still have a valuable message: "An important feature of true tragedy is that we are left with a sense of the greatness of man as well as of the suffering involved in human life..." (Boulton 147).

The protagonists of Shaffer's plays are also marked by some sort of small failures, of little signs of human frailty and infancy. Pizarro suffers humiliatingly from a pain in the back which occasionally makes him collapse. His physical shortcomings are too strong, together with his existential anguish and his tormented mind, obsessed with power, fame, time and death. Salieri is characterized by his obsession with sweets and candies, intoxicating himself; however, as the Venticelli comment, Mozart claimed having been poisoned when he was dying (Shaffer **Amadeus** 12). Salieri's little vices become ridiculous by their triviality and vanity, which, as the play progresses, become even worse with the decrepitude of old age, characterized by an old man's voice and an old wig. By and by, sweetness becomes bitterness, and his little vices become a deep and venomous hatred against God and against His representative: Mozart. The poison of envy contaminates Salieri, and therefore he is unqualified for the task of the noble, exemplary hero. He becomes ridiculous again when he attempts suicide and fails.

Mozart is also portrayed as a ridiculous figure, vain, immature, obsessed with candies and sweets. He is infantile in his relation with Constanze, depends on his father, and is often insecure and lonely. In Homer the hero is exalted and is represented by the aristocrat (Schüller 15). Aeschylus' heroes are of that kind, strong individuals, like the mythical figure of Prometheus. Oedipus, in spite of his faults signalized by his own name, is a virtuous and beloved king. Notwithstanding the presence of the gods in the Greek tradition, the hero is a man, though a noble representative of the species. Even in the ancient poems by Homer, men and not the gods are the center of the attention and of the action (16). Shaffer celebrates the common man in **Equus** and a historical celebrity in **The Royal Hunt**, in **Amadeus**, and in **Yonadab**, but under the perspective of the narrator, who is a common man—Young Martin, the prosaic Dr. Dysart, Yonadab, Salieri (even though, Salieri was in fact famous at his time).

Notwithstanding all the differences in relation to the protagonist, in Shaffer's plays, as well as in the Greek tragedies, heroes are seen performing great acts and gestures, radical actions, like murders, crimes and transgressions, risking everything. The scene of Alan blinding the horses can be a very interesting illustration of the evident parallel with the scene of Oedipus blinding himself, and also with another Greek tragedy—Sophocles' **Ajax**—, in which Ajax destroys a flock of sheep thinking that he is avenging the honor of Achylles' sword, which was given to Ulysses. Similarly, Alan blinds the six horses in the belief that he is hurting Equus.

One of the fundamental differences between Shaffer's heroes and the Greeks' resides in the relationship between the heroes and their people. In **Oedipus**, for example, there is a great

identification between the hero and his people—he is the priest, sometimes the savior, the governor, and the destroyer of his people. In Shaffer this kind of relation is not often evident. It can be seen in Atahuallpa and his identification with the Inca people in **The Royal Hunt**, but the protagonist is Pizarro. In **Yonadab**, there are two great figures that interfere with life in society: David and Tamar. But the protagonist of the play is Yonadab, and he is impotent to affect the life of the city, he lives in the periphery of power. His suffering does not alter or interfere in the country's life. The same can be said about Alan's suffering, totally individual. Salieri's suffering is also private. Dysart's anguishes are metaphysical, familial, and professional, pertaining only to his private life. They do not endanger the world, although he dreams of being a priest of an ancient culture.

The disappearance of the traditional view of the hero in the modern theatre (kings, nobles, aristocrats) becomes crucial with the crisis of rationality, the predominance of mass media, the complete abandonment of poetic drama, the crisis of the great myths and rituals, the crisis of Enlightenment, the crisis of science, of history, and of democracy. In a way, Shaffer acknowledges all that in his plays and laments the death of the old gods, the loss of faith, the lack of meaning in present hfe. Indeed, he tries to involve the audience in a discussion of these issues, although the information presented is fragmentary and the views distorted, and limited. Shaffer is not neutral, his narrators defend a certain perspective. In **Amadeus**, the audience is unusually seen inside the play, in a virtual stage, while the stage is seen as the audience. For a moment, the actors become the audience, and the audience the actors.

Shaffer's heroes are impregnate with the Oedipian complex, evident in Alan's tense relation with his father, his intimacy and complicity with his mother, and in his emotional shortcomings, in **Equus**. However, instead of blinding himself, Alan blinds Equus the god by piercing the eyes of the horses. The same Oedipal elements can be visualized in Mozart's tense relation with his father, who is too strong a figure in his life; the play makes evident the competition, the conflict, and envy between father and son, while Mozart seems to transfer to Constanze his childish need of protection. However, for the sake of our analysis, what is important is the link that can be made between Shaffer's characters with Sophocles' **Oedipus**, not the Freudian theory, although a psychoanalytical reading of Shaffer would be a fascinating endeavor. The dilemma experienced by Oedipus has several dimensions: social, ethical, political, but the most relevant seems to be the question of his own origin, the search for his own identity. The familial problem seems to be circumstancial.

The absence of a fatherly figure is also relevant in Pizarro's personality. The death of Atahuallpa's father, the old Inca, and the crisis of succession in the Inca Empire are also important. Similarly, the suffocating father figure, always oppressive and intimidating, is also evident in **Yonadab**, in David's relation with his children. However, Tamar shakes the family balance. She resists her father, orders him around, and determines the action in the family. She is a strong woman, a new Medea, a new Electra. In Shaffer's plays the relation between child and father oscillates between total subjection or frontal resistance, silent resignation or full fight. The family as institution is always alluded to in Shaffer's plays. Yonadab is the son of a despised brother, while the family of King David is in the center of God's choice. Mozart belongs to a poor family, Alan has a common family in a great crisis of dialogue and relationship, Pizarro has no family at all and contrasts with Atahuallpa, who is the leader of a clan. The same crisis of the family shakes the balance in Sophocles' **Oedipus** and in Euripides' **Medea**.

A criticism made on Shaffer's plays is that all his characters are Prometheus (Stanley Kauffmann *apud* Cooke and Page 67). In fact, if we take Yonadab, for example, we can identify many Promethean characteristics in him: the intention of creating a new world, a more tolerant society, a more just cosmos, his open resistance to God's authority. The same fight with God is visible in **Amadeus**, in **Equus**, and in **The Royal Hunt**. The Promethean motive is there, it cannot be denied, but it does not make Shaffer's hero a simplistic artifice. Each character has many other characteristics that make their personality rich, each one moving in a different world. Yonadab, for example, has an ambiguity, a hesitation, a human fragility that cannot be found in Aeschylus' **Prometheus**. In Shaffer we can see the solitary hero moving in a chaotic and meaningless world.[153]

In contrast with Aeschylus' Prometheus, Shaffer's heroes are perhaps more clearly defined as disenchanted heroes, inhabiting a world of conflict, rejecting society as it is ordered, questioning the meaning of life, abandoning the old idealism, faith, and official values, as Pizarro, Yonadab, Salieri and Dysart do. In Yonadab and in Salieri, cynicism and irony near the limits of tragicomicality, like when the curtains come down before Yonadab. Their personalities are very alike and their personal dilemmas are similar: their experiences with God, with success, with the other characters, and with society. They are in trouble because of their experience with evil, and have a very keen mind and tongue.

[153] According to Anatol Rosenfeld, the modern character faces the loneliness of the individual amid a chaotic and meaningless crowd (64).

Many of Shaffer's heroes are also narrators, therefore able to speak with eloquence and argue with logic. In **Yonadab** and **Amadeus** Shaffer presents narrators who live under the shadow of great mythical personalities, great heroes. These heroes are seen under the view of ordinary citizen, as if society was given a view from the perspective of the marginal, rejected man. Indeed, there is a criticism on Shaffer that he is not neutral, that he leaves little room for interpretation, few chances for the audience to infer and discover (Benedict Nightingale *apud* Cooke & Page 77). This impression may be caused by the use of a narrator who introduces, explains, comments on every special character or event in the play, undressing the plot and the souls of the characters. In **Equus** this is inevitable since Dysart is a psychiatrist and his professional as well as personal task is to try to understand Alan's laconic behavior. In fact Shaffer's narrators are really very eloquent, explanatory, analytical and self-conscious, and this is part of Shaffer's notion of theatre as affirmation, as something serious, meant to trigger reflection. Anyway, the hero is really fundamental in Shaffer, and his artifice of the character-narrator seems to work very well. When the narrator is also the protagonist (Yonadab, Salieri, Dysart), he naturally becomes the center of attention; when he is not the main character (Old Mrtin) he is clearly subject to the main one. As Dawson says, "nothing is more frustrating to an audience than being allowed to mistake where the centre of interest lies. We do not emerge from a performance of **Macbeth** saying, 'I wonder what happened to that porter?'" (**Drama and the Dramatic** 35). The same can be applied to Shaffer's plays: we do not emerge from them wondering what happened to Old Martin.

A very important difference between Shaffer's heroes and the Greek tragedic heroes is the small amount of sympathy, if any, the heroes can count on, and their lack of solidarity. This may be somehow part related to the absence of a traditional Chorus. Prometheus has the consolation of the Oceanides, of Io, and of Ocean. Oedipus has the mournful advice and lament of the Chorus, Creon's mercy, and the Thebans' pity. Medea has Aegeus' help and the Chorus' lament and sympathy. Indeed, Alan has the sympathy of Dysart, and Pizarro is looked at with sympathy by the narrator Martin. But Salieri's sympathy for Mozart is totally destroyed by his evil. Yonadab is totally self-centred and has no sympathy for David, or for Amnon, Tamar or whoever; solidarity is something he totally ignores.

In terms of the hero as a central element in the play, and of the complex relations between the protagonist and the antagonist, the most delicate play by Shaffer is **Yonadab**. Tamar confronts Yonadab, takes advantage of him and moves beyond his expectancies, anticipating his

steps. When Tamar is raped, she changes and acquires experience, by suffering, by violence, in spite of being still very young and having not experienced marriage or motherhood. Tamar represents the contradiction of the puritan and the erotic girl, the saint and the vulgar woman, at the same time idealistic and practical, almost playing the role of a prostitute as part of her plan of vengeance. She is a pious servant of Yaveh and, at the same time, the cause of Amnon's uncontrollable erotic excitement. She pretends to be blasphemous in order to perform the work of Yaveh. In fact she poses as a courtesan, but wants to be a martyr and a saint. In a way, Tamar suffers a process of masculinization, and becomes a quite virile character. Yonadab, although enchanted, bewitched by Tamar's spell and by his wish of vengeance and social, historical change, acts as a eunuch. Thus, Tamar menaces the centrality of Yonadab as the protagonist of the play. Yonadab is the great voyeur, whose eroticism is expressed by looking at the spectacle of faith and love, passively watching the lives and movements of the other characters. By his own nature, he stands outside the focus and even introduces himself as a great master of ceremonies; he only contemplates the expressions of passion, without experiencing it. Besides, David's curse anathematizes him as a voyeur. In addition, Yonadab's enjoyment is always hindered by a curtain. Nevertheless, he remais the central character for the audience, due to his complexity and his invisible pulling of the strings. However, no Greek protagonist is a voyeur, not even Prometheus, who is bound to the rocks and condemned to immobility. Even Oedipus, when caught seeing too much, plucks out his own eyes.

Among Shaffer's protagonists, Pizarro, having once been fed by a sow, can be included in a long list of famous heroes. Romulus and Remus were fed by a wolf; Gilgamesh, Cyrus, Paris were all fed by animals—wolves, eagles, dogs, bears (Nuñez 147). In this respect, Pizarro carries the sign of the hero, although he has received no supernatural announcements, no special prophecies, no divine signs, unlike Oedipus. However, Pizarro is a man marked by God, as it is symbolized by his irregular uncommon birth. Similarly, Oedipus is marked by the mystery of an unknown origin. Medea also comes from abroad, from the outside, and although her origin is known, she is a foreigner, someone who does not belong to the legitimate cultural heritage, she is an outsider, just like Oedipus.

Hamartia is a fundamental term in the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, very well illustrated by Sophocles' **Oedipus** and Aeschylus' **Prometheus**, but problematic with Euripides' **Medea**. In Shaffer, the term is also problematic because his heroes commit real crimes and not mere mistakes; their crimes are serious, not easily explained in terms of ignorance or accident;

they are intentional, passionate, and also conscious. However, the basic notion of *hamartia* as a trespassing of the line, a "démesure" is present in Shaffer, as well as the relation between *hamartia* and *hybris*. In a way, the hero's *hamartia* is part of the human condition—the result of the wish for life or of the fear of death—, but it is also very conscious, the result of the choices of the hero. All Shaffer's characters act in knowledge. Pizarro's *hamartia* was his hesitating belief in Atahuallpa's power to overcome death and resurrect, a momentary error of judgement, a miscalculation, and also a sign of his fragility as an insecure human being, desperately in need of faith. The same thing tempts Yonadab and brings his sudden collapse. In these cases, Shaffer's heroes convey a wish of being infinite, eternal, of overcoming time and death, revealing their real *hybris*. Salieri also has this *hybris* which leads him to commit a *hamartia* and to suffer God's final punishment.

In Shaffer's **Yonadab** the curse of the *génos*, of the family, is evident since Yonadab is the son of a man rejected by Yaveh. And the curse is fundamental in the Greek plays. It is also visible in Shaffer's **Equus**, in which Dysart seems to be cursed to a tasteless, childless life, since he is finally unable to give up his activity as a priest in leading the sacrifices of children. Salieri, in **Amadeus,** seems to suffer a similar condemnation: the sense of living under a curse, under an anathema. And Salieri is even able to communicate this kind of curse onto the posterity when he offers his services as saint of the mediocre. Yonadab is also under a curse. For sure, the divine justice, *nemesis*, brings this curse. Oedipus, Prometheus, and Medea are also characters who live under a curse; their lives are marked by a negative force haunting their trends.

Hybris is also very much visible in Shaffer's plays, as it is in the Greek ones—Pizarro's profound wish of overcoming time and death, his disdain for the God of the Christian tradition and his fascination with the religious alternative in Peru, the Inca god. *Hybris* is also very much visible in Alan's excess of passion and sexual wish badly conducted and in Dysart's cleanliness, his excess of rationality, coldness and ennui. It is also evident in Salieri's and Yonadab's attempts to resist and overcome the power of God, of the absolute. In one word, Shaffer's characters are contaminated with an irrepressible sense of pride based on wit and will. Biblical pride is one of Shaffer's plays' main elements—Salieri's envious arrogance, Yonadab's presumptions before God.

But Shaffer's characters also suffer from a complex of inferiority; they seem ironically very humble, like Pizarro's denial of any noble ideal or knighthood code, or Dysart's consciousness of his lack of passion, the consciousness of the mediocrity of his life. Salieri is also

conscious of his mediocrity, but he is proud of his humanity and wants to confirm it. The characters' pride crashes invariably before the sovereignty of God. Though the gods are proved to be mere fantasies they do take revenge at the end, and come to punish the heroes.

In Shaffer's plays, similarly to the Greek tragedies, the sense of guilt is a fundamental element. Dysart is tormented by a feeling of guilt because of the violence he performs as a psychiatrist against the minds of teenagers. At least part of his anguish can be explained by this sense of guilt. Even Alan's crime can be partially explained by his sense of guilt for desiring Jill, and because of that he kills Equus the god. The context of psychoanalysis also helps to enhance the pathological nature of his guilt feeling. The sense of guilt is also present in Pizarro's torment for not freeing Atahuallpa. Pizarro also feels the loss of the gods of the past, and feels guilty for killing a god in the present. Implying the sense of guilt in modern man, Salieri proclaims himself the patron saint of the mediocre, justifying their abandonment of Mozart. The sense of guilt is implied by the atmosphere of confession that the play conveys. It is confirmed by his attempt at suicide. And guilt contrasts with innocence in Shaffer's **Amadeus**. Yonadab also lives between cynicism and guilt, between daring to trespass the lines of dogma and the sense of guilt for generating violence—the rape of Tamar, the killing of Amnon—, between hiding and confessing. Yonadab is the typical man guided by reason, assaulted by doubt and fascinated with faith. Salieri, Dysart, Pizarro and even Yonadab are characters assaulted by guilt. Yonadab, however, hides his sense of guilt behind a facade of cynicism and verbosity. He hides his cowardice with a daring attitude, openly facing and resisting David. However, his bravado does not neutralize his fragility and ambiguity.

In terms of action Shaffer's plays, like the Greek ones, are all complete, having a balanced magnitude, according to the tolerance of the audience; they are neither too long, nor too short. All the scenes are presented according to the notion of probability and necessity, having a reasonable cause; all the incidents are weaved and interconnected. Unity of action is for sure one of Shaffer's greatest virtues. Every movement in the plays is dictated by a meaningful purpose.

As a consequence of *hybris* and *hamartia*, *nemesis* comes. In some Greek plays, such as Aeschylus' **Eumenides**, the *Erinyes* are seen as a vehicle of God's punishment on the hero. In **Yonadab**, Tamar performs the role of the *Erinyes;* she is the hand of God following and punishing, taking revenge on Yonadab. In **Amadeus**, Salieri's dreams perform the *Erinyes*' part, dreams that drive him mad. In **Equus**, Dysart is assaulted by dreams of guilt and torment. The

Erinyes can be also identified in the shadowy presence of the Providence against Yonadab and Salieri.

The notion of peripety is evident in Aeschylus' **Prometheus**, who is virtually cast into the underworld. Oedipus, after knowing his true identity, recognizes that he is a criminal and that Jocasta is his mother; therefore he pierces his own eyes after her suicide. His fall is shown before all the citizens of Thebes. But peripety is problematic in **Medea**, for she escapes unpunished in a chariot, through the air. In Shaffer's plays, peripety has a certain complexity. There is a dichotomy between the external and the internal conflicts. Thus externally Pizarro conquers the New World, defeats the Inca Empire and becomes the great model of hero. But internally he is broken, disillusioned. He conquers the world, but loses his soul. His life is a great mundane success, but he is spiritually dead. Pizarro cannot conquer Time and Death, he cannot find eternal life, and cannot attain faith. Dysart experiences the same dichotomy: externally his treatment of Alan is a success, but internally he knows that the boy' s life will have no meaning, no passion, no enthusiasm, and no happiness. In **Amadeus** the dichotomy is less apparent: during Salieri's life he achieves sudden success, but his fame gradually deteriorates, while the recognition of Mozart's work increases. Thus Salieri ultimately falls externally as well as internally. The same can be said about Yonadab, who dies spiritually and is ostracized externally.

Anagnorisis is a problematic element in Greek plays like **Prometheus** and **Medea**, although it is perfectly achieved in **Oedipus**. In Shaffer it is evident and fundamental in **Yonadab**, **Amadeus**, **Equus** and **The Royal Hunt**.[154] Pizarro has an important moment of recognition of his condition, at the end of the play, after Atahuallpa's death. Dysart has his moment of illumination when he discovers the reason of Alan's traumas, and when he meditates on his own impossibility of changing society or discarding it. Salieri finally understands his doom through God's silent answer. Yonadab also experiences *anagnorisis* when Tamar comes to explain her scheming and her part in God's divine plan: Yonadab recognizes Tamar's plans, her wit, her superiority, and her control of the situation. Thus Shaffer's heroes are all caught in a trap and become finally conscious of it.

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[154] "An equally important aspect of classical tragedy that Shaffer observes is the change from ignorance to knowledge. By examining the events that led up to Alan's crime, Dysart comes to understand not only his patient but also himself, and it is he who is the truly tragic hero, whose flaw, over which he has no control, is his joylessness, his emotional sterility" (Klein 119).

In Shaffer the scenes of *pathos* are so important as in the Greeks, or even more. The scene of Oedipus coming to the stage, blind and bloody, makes an unquestionable parallel with the six horses blinded in **Equus**. The scene of Medea killing her children in the backside of the stage finds points of contact with the rape of Tamar behind the curtain and the killing of Amnon below the carpet. Prometheus' suffering, bound to the rocks, can be linked to the suffering of Atahuallpa, bound to Pizarro and imprisoned in a room. However, a subtle difference is perceptible: in the Greeks, violence is performed outside the visible space of the stage, in Shaffer violence is performed on the stage, before the audience. And as the Greeks hid violence for reasons of decorum, Shaffer stylizes violence for the same reason. Shaffer avoids the realistic portrayal of violence. He prefers the symbolic gestures, the metaphorical allusions, abstractions, slow movements. Thus, the rape of Tamar is linked with the Hebrew language - the positions formed by the bodies are linked to the letters of the alphabet. For that reason eroticism and violence are linked in Shaffer, and at the same time put under control through stylization. Thus Alan's totally distorted eroticism, seen as adulterous through the eyes of Equus, is stylized in **Equus**. On the other hand, Alan's sexual frustration is a symbol of Dysart's sexual frustration, evident in the tastelessness of his sexual and family life.[155] The same deformed view of sexuality, as well as sexuality linked with violence, is visible in **Yonadab**. Pleasure and pain, desire and terror, anguish and fruition are present in Tamar, Yonadab, and even in Salieri's gluttony and vengeance. Salieri's attempted suicide is shown on the stage, but neutralized by his sudden standing up. The crime of suicide, considered a symbol of the destruction of the evolution, of life, is derided by Salieri's frustrated attempt.

The scene of Atahuallpa's death is rich in pathetic profundity. Alan's collapse after the confession and recognition of his crime, his liberation from the power of Equus, is also pathetic. The same can be said of Salieri's attempted suicide, full of *pathos*, of suffering, of anguish and pity. Yonadab's torture, Tamar's rape and solitary walk through the streets, and Amnon's death are all pathetic, and enhance the emotional richness of the play. The violent scenes of the massacre of the Indians in **The Royal Hunt**, the rape of Tamar, the garroting of Atahuallpa are all shown in style, not realistically, though on the stage, not back stage or in off.

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[155] Indeed sexuality is seen under very negative perspectives in Shaffer's plays. However the playwright criticized a lot the cinematic production of **Equus**, because of its realism, its emphasis on the bloody, erotic, realistic, and crude portrayal of violence.

Catharsis is one of the most delicate issues in tragedy, and strong in the Greek plays and in Shaffer's. It is clearly linked with the emotional intensity of the play, with the capacity the play has to trigger pity and fear in the audience. It is not provided by the mere visual spectacle, merely by the use of music and dance. It has to do with the situation experienced by the protagonist, and its moral, human, and social implications. The audience must feel somehow identified with the suffering of the hero. The Greeks achieved it by portraying noble, although not perfect, men making a serious mistake and falling from a high condition. Peter Shaffer achieves it, in a different level and in a different way, by presenting the common man as protagonist, sometimes the cynical man. In post-modern times, there seem to be no noble heroes to admire and pity. The negative aspects of the hero's personality are much more in evidence today. It is extremely difficult to feel pity for a cynic man, and this is Shaffer's challenge. But when the audience realizes that the neurotic man is just a man and that the selfish conqueror is just another man, identification becomes a possibility. The audience recognizes a similarity with the dark side of their own selves, for Shaffer's protagonists are human beings undergoing extreme experiences, and at the same time subject to the same quotidian limitations and contingencies. The audience may be touched by the humanity of Shaffer's characters, by the anguish they suffer, by the frailties they show, by the dreams they have, and by the frustration they undergo.

Catharsis is quite problematic nowadays, since the sense of sympathy for the other human being is becoming rare in a society marked by indifference, individualism, competition, mass media communication, materialism, and violence.[156] Individualism seems to be a great hindrance to a tragic sense of life, since in order to have tragedy it is important to have a sense of community.[157] But in a way, even the Greek heroes are isolated in their critical condition: Prometheus on the rock, Oedipus with his internal and external anguish, Medea in her condition of being a despised woman. Similarly, Yonadab, Salieri, Dysart, and Pizarro feel isolated. However, Shaffer breaks the walls of indifference and touches the audience, appealing to their identification with the situation of the hero. The audience faces their own cares and compulsions

[156] "Each day we sup our fill of horrors—in the newspaper, on the television screen, or the radio—and thus we grow insensible to fresh outrage. This numbness has a crucial bearing on the possibility of tragic style.... Compared with the realities of war and oppression that surround us, the gravest imaginings of the poets are diminished to a scale of private or artificial terror" (Steiner 315).

[157] Costa says that the Greek tragedy is characterized by action, by destiny, in contrast with the modern and contemporary tragedy, which are centred on the character (Costa 71). In fact, capitalism alienates the hero and enhances subjectivity (71).

in Salieri, their own anonymous life and fears of failure and mediocrity in Salieri' s and Yonadab's anguish. However, the Greek heroes could count on the Chorus' explicit sympathy. And the Chorus represented a bridge between the dramatist and the audience, raising the emotions of the public and describing the scenes, invoking the gods and explaining the significance of the events represented, the social and cosmic implications of the events. This is usually denied to the modern protagonist. The Chorus is practically absent from the contemporary theatre, but Shaffer wants to recover the function of a Chorus and the sense of identification between the audience and the characters on the stage. Thus Pizarro has the sympathy of the narrator, Old Martin, and Alan has the sympathy of Dysart, at least. And the audience in general can feel sympathy for the innocent suffering of Atahuallpa, for the Indian people, for the horses and Alan in **Equus**, Mozart in **Amadeus**, and Tamar in **Yonadab**.

The dark side of the protagonists also triggers the sense of fear in the audience, the fear of the possibility of undergoing the same internal fall, the same catastrophe. The audience perceives in the characters the distress of living in a world that is unfair, mediocre, and indifferent. The plays reveal the nightmares of the common man in the present time: the fear of death, the fear of sex, the experience of lust, desire, vanity, the fear of rejection, the sense of time, of temporality. Besides, the audience witnesses the inner struggles of the protagonists, their conflicts and fears. As they share this knowledge with the hero, a relation of complicity is established. Shaffer's protagonists are very human in their faults. And it is possible to feel pity for and fear with them because we can identify with and fear their condition of being losers, mediocre, and incompetent. The audience cares about the suffering of the hero, because it has witnessed the intensity of their pain, the honesty of their cry, the common taste of their villainy, of their envy and wish of revenge. Besides, the narrator addresses the audience directly several times, thus confirming the expectation of participation.

In addition, the spiritual urge of Shaffer's protagonists is something the contemporary man feels, or at least understands, though many would not recognize it. This urge for spirituality, for an explanation, in other words, the metaphysical concern seems to be inherent in human beings. Although the protagonists are impotent to believe, they lament the loss of faith, they cry for the loss of hope, and that touches deeply the contemporary audience that is bored with materialism, consumerism, rationalism, and craves for some sort of transcendence, missing the contact with the divine. The present society, Shaffer seems to perceive, has lost its dearest myths

and urgently needs new explanations, new dreams.[158] And his plays provide the audience with inspiration and provocation.[159]

Besides, Shaffer's plays touch both the mind and the emotion of the audience. His theatre is rich in cathartic experience, and therefore it is a great success. It is far from being cold, rational, intellectualized drama. It touches mind and heart, showing the fragility of the human dream, and at the same time the glory of the human life, the real though ambiguous face of the human being. Indeed, in spite of the apparent dryness of Shaffer's protagonists, they also provide a positive experience of *catharsis*.

X. J. Kennedy says, discussing *catharsis*:

> Whatever his exact meaning, clearly Aristotle implies that after witnessing a tragedy we feel better, not worse—not depressed, but somehow elated. We take a kind of pleasure in the spectacle of a noble man being abased, but surely this pleasure is a legitimate one. For tragedy, Edith Hamilton wrote, affects us as "pain transmuted into exaltation by the alchemy of poetry.[160] (Kennedy **Literature** 856)

This can be applied to Shaffer's plays. Although modern, they cause a sense of "elation" in the audience, in the sense that it can identify with the suffering of the protagonist, with his dramas, dilemmas, limitations and anguish, and fear the same terrible dryness of the present world.[161] Therefore, in spite of all the portrayal of a sense of futility, of pointlessness, Shaffer's plays are not depressive, but suggest something more: the recognition, at least, that our world could be different, that the capacity to dream is inherent in the human heart, and that even if the worst happens and the dreams become nightmares of blood and stones, the individual can wake up and defy the night, the moon, the sun.

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[158] "Modern man does not regard life as tragic. He thinks that history is the record of the progressive triumph of good over evil. He does not recognise the simple but profound truth that man's life remains self-contradictory in its sin, no matter how high human culture rises; that the highest expression of human spirituality, therefore, contains also the subtlest form of human sin. The failure to recognise this fact gives modern culture a non-tragic conception of human history. To recognise this fact, and nothing more, is to reduce human history to simple tragedy" (Niebuhr 18-9).

[159] "It has often been said that tragedy is impossible, in the twentieth century, because our philosophical assumptions are non-tragic. What is then often adduced, as evidence, is the humanism of the Enlightenment or perhaps the Renaissance. I have already argued that this is useless; the humanism that matters is not now of those kinds. What is more important to notice is that the three characteristically new systems of thinking, in our own time—Marxism, Freudianism, Existentialism—are all, in their most common forms, tragic. Man can achieve his full life only after violent conflict; man is essentially frustrated, and divided against himself, while he lives in society; man is torn by intorelable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity. From these ordinary propositions, and from their combination in so many minds, it is not surprising that so much tragedy has in fact emerged" (Williams 189).

[160] "The Idea of Tragedy" in **The Greek Way to Western Civilization**. New York: Norton, 1942.

[161] "The ultimate effect of tragedy is to sharpen our feeling of responsibility, to make us more fully aware that we have erred as the tragic figures have erred (whether they be many or one in the play we see). We cry out against what has happened. We have experienced a *catharsis* only to reject it" (Leech 54).

A common element between Shaffer and the Greeks is that their tragedies present the conflicts, tensions and anguishes of their time and place, a tension between the past and the present, the recognition of a change in society. Tragedies reflect their historical moments. They debate themes, values, and social conflicts, using mythological, artistic, and imaginary elements.[162] They assume that communication is possible and that there is an organized collectivity, a *pólis*, a cultural center, a social order. In modernity, the idea of reality is altered by science (theory of reality), media (TV, newspapers, cinema), cybernetics, and that conveys a fragmentary sense of reality.[163] However, society also experiences the sense of the integration of the whole world in a new kind of order, a new drawing of the mundane map. Telecommunications, global economy, and shared information create a new perception of reality.

Shaffer's tragedies reveal the problematic character of language and of the apprehension of the transcendent. They display the ambiguities of the human being, of human society, the pervasive and erosive question of power, the lack of moral patterns, the relativity of truth, the search for new myths, the reassessment of history, the changes of family relations. Tragedies—Greek, Elizabethan and contemporary—usually convey the issues connected with the anxiety triggered by the transition undergone by the societies in which they are produced.[164]

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[162] The ful price of tragedy is the recognition that "there are in the world mysteries of injustice, disasters in excess of guilt, and realities which do constant violence to our moral expectations" (Steiner 133). Thus, Shaffer's plays are very challenging, for they face the complex problems of the modern world.

[163] In fact, commenting on the fragmentariness of the contemporary view of reality and how it affects the theories of drama, Marvin Carlson observes that "[a]n increasing awareness of the instability of the self and of the complexities and interrelationships of self, culture, and language have distanced us today even further from that world of naive directness" (540).

[164] René Girard observes: "Os historiadores concordam em situar a tragédia grega em um período de transição entre uma ordem religiosa arcaica e uma ordem mais 'moderna', estatal e judiciária, que vai sucedê-la. Antes de entrar em decadência, a ordem arcaica experimentou uma certa estabilidade. Esta estabilidade só poderia repousar sobre a dimensão religiosa, ou seja, sobre o rito sacrificial" (Girard **Violência e Sagrado** 61).

Conclusion

In the present dissertation, based on a theoretical paradigm constituted by Aristotle's **Poetics** and by the main dramatic conventions and techniques, I have intended to analyze Peter Shaffer's use of theatrical devices and his achievements as a tragic dramatist by comparing four of his plays with three Greek tragedies.

In the first chapter I presented the basic elements of Aristotle's **Poetics** concerning tragedy, having included a study of *mimesis*, action, the hero, *hamartia*, *peripety*, *anagnorisis*, *pathos*, pity and fear, and *catharsis*. In addition, I analyzed some theatrical devices and their importance to the creation and production of drama: characterization, tension, structure, dialogue, language, the Chorus, theme, scenery, costumes, gestures, positioning and movement, lighting, sound effects, music and dance.

In the second chapter I analyzed the Greek plays selected—Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound**, Sophocles' **Oedipus the King**, and Euripides' **Medea**—, considering their use of the theatrical devices and Aristotle's most important terms and principles. In fact, the Greek plays are very rich in terms of theatrical devices, in spite of their technological limitations in relation to our time. The Greeks developed a complex and sophisticated stage machinery and an amazing practice of drama. The plays present many elements coincident with Aristotle's notions of tragedy, but the correlation is not perfect. The Greek tragedians, having preceded the Greek philosopher, "transgressed" many rules and principles; that is, they presented variations and personal contributions.

In the third chapter I studied Peter Shaffer's plays—**The Royal Hunt of the Sun, Equus, Amadeus**, and **Yonadab**—, analyzing their use of theatrical devices and of the principles established by Aristotle. Indeed Shaffer's plays show a very creative use of theatrical devices and a great perception and acknowledgment of the Aristotelian main assumptions. They are very complex and rich as drama, and at the same time represent an evident effort to accomplish the tragic purpose.

In the fourth chapter I compared Shaffer's plays with the Greek ones and found many similarities and differences between them. Shaffer makes conscious connections with the Greeks,

reshaping old narratives, recapturing the importance of myths, focusing on the centrality of the human being, of the human life, creating a multidimensional experience of theatre, using the several theatrical resources, respecting some fundamental principles and forms, developing serious themes, and debating social and cultural issues. I have also observed some differences related mainly to aspects of modernity, like the preference for the psychological approach, the isolation of the hero, and the predominance of a skeptical view of reality which contemplates no salvation and no signs of hope and conveys a great sense of disillusionment and pessimism in relation to the human dignity.

Greek tragedies were the result of a historical evolution and the artistic experience of a civilization. In Greece, tragedy was part of the civic and religious calendar, and part of quotidian life. In the contemporary experience, for historical and cultural reasons, tragedy has not such a religious and civic importance. However, there are many connections between the Greek idea of tragedy and its modern notion. Shaffer's plays may therefore be seen as tragedies in a modern sense, having some correspondences with the Greek tragedies but endowing the tragic genre with new elements. Certainly in order to have tragedies, especially modern ones, we do not need to recreate the cultural background of the Greeks, present the same historical elements and reproduce the same social phenomena. In fact, theatre experiences are multi-cultural and found in many countries, with different cultural and historical backgrounds, like China, Japan, India, Egypt, and in Europe. For sure, modern tragedy cannot be simply a copy of the Greek achievements, it must have many particularities of the modern conception of the world!

Some critics, like George Steiner, say that the Christian environment kills the tragic sense of life. Steiner clearly blames the Judeo-Christian background for the lack of tragedy in modernity, as well as the technical and social improvements (120). For him, tragedy is a rare, a "splendid accident" (107). Steiner presupposes that the sense of God's injustice and of the meaninglessness of life is fundamental for tragedy and lacking in the Christian conception. However, to begin with, we cannot easily say that we live in a Christian age or in a Christian world, and society does not share many beliefs. The contemporary view of reality is totally fragmentary, and Shaffer deals very well with the fragmentariness of the present time. Furthermore philosophers like Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer would probably argue that tragedy can be evident, and efficiently recreated, even in a culture marked by the Christian creed. Kierkegaard believes that faith, anguish, freedom, and the facing of the absurd are part of life, of

the Christian view of life. He even suggests that suffering is the fundamental element of the Christian perspective of life.

Steiner also blames the anti-tragic essence of modernity on the notion of hope, and in that sense even Marxism would be anti-tragic. Raymond Williams disagrees, and argues that the revolutionary sense of life is in the core of tragedy. In fact, the Greeks did not know the Christian expression of hope, or the notion of redemption, of historical salvation, but they did value the dignity of the human life, the superiority of the hero in contrast with the hostility of the environment and the forces of destiny.

Peter Shaffer's plays also reflect the hostile environment that characterizes post-modern times; they show the lack of a comprehensive premise that could justify the present order; they acknowledge the effects of the media on people's perception of reality; they display our cultural diversity; they proclaim resistance to the contemporary tendency to celebrate technological capitalism with all its commodities and fetishes; they oppose the fragmentation of the sense of reality and the determining and imposing forces of present culture and society. We must admit that tragedy, in a pure and traditional form, is a much more difficult endeavour in contemporary time.

Sympathy, however, is something that Shaffer's characters do not know, even as regards themselves. They live under the shadow of complete indifference and cynicism, on the verge of Machiavellianism. Post-modern time, however, sees the awakening of the human sensibility in relation to human values and human rights. There is now the consciousness of the importance of caring about people, animals and nature, which can be exemplified by the several conservationist and human rights defense groups and movements like Green Peace, UNICEF, Amnesty International, and humanitarian groups of help to hungry people, victims of war, exiled populations, refugees and minorities.

There is also a crisis of rationality in the present time, a crisis of science, and the absence of any final, essential notion of truth, of truth that could be objectified. Indeed the contemporary environment is full of tragic significance since, like the Greeks, we are experiencing some sort of cultural decline, of general crisis, something that has political, social, and ideological implications. Like in Euripides' time, the present crisis takes the form of the destruction of the mythological comprehension of the universe and the absence of a philosophic understanding of life to mediate reality. Shaffer portrays the crisis of rationality in his play **Equus** by using the psychoanalytic context. The crisis concerning the understanding of reality is also evident in

Shaffer's **Yonadab**, in which Jewish mythology is attacked and a new mythological route is searched by the protagonist, although with no success.

The religious dimension of human life is also in effervescence nowadays. The Western world seems to observe its religious institutions with critical eyes while contemplating new forms of religious experience and thought, most of them with origin in the East. For a time Faith seemed totally destroyed by science, political ideology and revolution. However, the necessity of faith is reaffirmed in the present time, and Shaffer conveys it as the need of a mythical apprehension of life, as the urge for experiences that transcend the quotidian, mediocre, rational, and technological level of existence. This is evident in plays like **Equus**, **Yonadab** and **The Royal Hunt**, in which the protagonists live in a world marked by decadent religious expressions and consider insurgent, although not efficient and permanent, religious alternatives. Thus, the religious dimension is part of the generalized political, cultural, and institutional crisis. Shaffer perceives that and includes this discussion in his plays.

Critics like John Von Szeliski see tragedy as not possible in an environment of pessimism, of no hope at all (3), whereas critics like Steiner say that tragedy is not possible in an environment of full optimism and blind hope. However, the Greeks were neither pessimistic nor optimistic, they were realistic **and so seems to be Shaffer's theatre**. Indeed his plays are not of vanguard, they are not irrational, or nihilistic. His characters are articulate, although ambiguous and pessimistic; they long for the capacity to believe, although they are incapable of faith. Shaffer's theatre is not absurd, although his protagonists are skeptical and sometimes cynical.

George Steiner believes that tragedy is impossible in a society that has solved all its basic structural social problems. Technological advancements and social development would kill tragedy. But our contemporary time is far from finding the solution for all the social problems in the world. Mankind is very distant from a satisfactory answer to its ethical, economic, moral, social, energetical, ecological, habitational, spiritual, ideological, psychological, and interpersonal problems, as well as its artistic problems. Maybe in the rich countries, society is more or less materially balanced, but not in the majority of the world. Besides, we still have health and ecological problems, cultural and religious conflicts and divergences that will hardly be solved by technological improvements.

Violence and depression, the isolation of the individual, a pervasive sense of despair, stress, and meaninglessness—these are all elements of the crisis that affects the audience nowadays. In Saffer's plays, the crisis of modernity is partially lived by Pizarro, Dr. Dysart, and

Yonadab: the question of practical atheism, religious confessionalism, and institutional decadence. Tragedy implies this heritage, this tradition of approaching critical moments in life and history and this is something that Shaffer's tragedies definitely do. Shaffer wants to include himself in the line of the tragic dramatists and has produced plays that deal seriously with the problems of the present society, in a way following, and at the same time recreating, tradition. After all, the peculiarities of modernity cannot be ignored or neutralized by the force of tradition. Thus Shaffer's modern approach includes an emphatic psychological treatment, more centered on the individual's dilemmas.

In fact the plays by Peter Shaffer are very important as a recovery of the view of theatre as a multidimensional experience, a proposal of a tragic view of drama, a search for an original alternative, an attempt at exploring contemporary complex themes, a long for meaning in the tumultuous experience of contemporary life. Shaffer's plays present at the same time music, dance, ritual, choreography, light, darkness, sound and emotion, dialogue and monologue, reason and emotional depth. Besides, he wants to overcome also the mere dimension of theatre as fun, as entertainment, including in his plays many profound questions, rich and complex debates about reality and the human condition. For the Greeks, theatre was already more than mere entertainment or show, it was a civic and religious experience. And this is part of what Shaffer seems to wish to recapture—theatre as a relevant elaboration of reality, as a critical contribution to the cultural life.

In fact, Shaffer is very conscious of the Greek tragedians, admiring them, trying to recover their great achievements, their magic, and their power, but always conscious of the limitations of present time. For sure, Shaffer is conscious of the Greek concept of tragedy, and wants to recreate its magic, to create something valuable, beautiful, important, and impacting. Since the nineteenth century, there has been a cultural, social, historical change in relation to tragedy, mainly due to the influence and contribution of dramatists like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, and Pirandello (Steiner 124). Engaging in a great task, Shaffer tries to redeem theatre from its apathy, without being naïve, admitting the challenges of present life, and proposing a tragic treatment of contemporary issues.

Shaffer's plays also represent an attempt at regaining the mythological dimension of human life, the dimension of mystery, of the unutterable, of the intuitive, of the supra-rational, transcending the decadence of the olds myths and announcing the necessity of new ones. Plays like **Equus** and **Yonadab** illustrate it very well: in **Equus** he recreates a myth, the horse-god, the

modern version of the unicorn in psychoanalytical terms. In fact, the contemporary presumption of living in a non-mythological age, governed by science and technology, by the laws of the market, by the political and social planning of a new world order, is quite ambiguous and deceptive.

The notion of mystery is intimately related to tragedy, and that is perceptible in the importance of the ritualized gesture, in the fear of death, in the importance of free will and of human dignity. As Professor Schüller observed in class, "we are condemned to mythical conceptions." The necessity of myths was not a privilege of the ancient civilizations. The modern, post-modern society also destroys and recreates its own myths. This seems to be one of Shaffer's great contributions: the acknowledgment of the need of dimensions that are beyond the level of rationality, the recapturing of emotion, intuition, and passion. And as myths offer a more concrete apprehension of reality, an alternative to the abstract, philosophical, rational understanding provided by science, they provide very good raw material for tragedies. The great challenge is to overcome the fragmentariness of present reality, in which the great general narratives have been replaced with partial, limited, minor, alternative views of life. The crisis of modernity has to do with the fragmentation of reality, as a result of the crisis of reason and science, of the absence of cultural centrality. This fragmentariness is often displayed in political and racial conflicts within and between different groups, and conveys partial views of reality. It is in fact a new moment in history. Traditional values like freedom, autonomy, democracy, equality, enlightenment and truth seem to be in crisis.

Shaffer's plays also convey a tragic view of man, the view of man as someone who has to transgress, either questioning political and social institutions like Pizarro who resists even the forces of time and death, or like Dr. Dysart who faces the demands of profession, and society with its massive pressure, or even resisting God's authority like Salieri and Yonadab, although they are condemned to a life of mediocrity and voyeurism. Shaffer's protagonists, like the Greek protagonists, are condemned because they dare to resist divine authority, social rules, and natural constraints. This idea of man as someone who needs to transgress is fundamental in the Greek tragedians as well as in Shaffer. It is evident in Sophocles' **Oedipus** and in Aeschylus' **Prometheus**. Euripides, besides showing very well the independent character of his protagonist, emphasizes her irrational drives, thus contrasting with Aristotle's emphasis on rationality. However, the essence of Greek tragedy is clear: "The world has a meaning, it is rational. The

wise men know." Therefore the world was called *cosmos*: order. This notion represents a great challenge for Shaffer, who lives in a world that apparently has lost its real, fundamental meaning.

Shaffer's plays also insist that the protagonist has a choice, an alternative—to accept destiny or to deny it. Nowadays everything seems to be politically conditioned, ideologically determined, and genetically planned. Greek tragedies also represent a resistance against the forces of alienation of the individual, since they suggest that man is offered the right to choose, accepting or not circumstances. In fact, the notion of total freedom, of freedom without limits does not exist in the Greek culture, or in any culture. Heroes are free to the extent that they are responsible for their acts. They face human problems and trespass the common limitations imposed by society, by God, or by external circumstances. In fact, Shaffer's protagonists present all the basic ingredients of the great tragic character: they are enigmatic because they are complex, although some critics think they are fully explained; they incur in pride- *hybris-*, fall from high expectations, since they commit a mistake- *hamartia-*, and suffer an extremely poignant penalty; but everything is the result of their choice whose responsibility they must take.

The structure of Shaffer's plays presents a clear relation of dependence, since the less important events are subordinate to the major conflict, their centre. In every play, balance is achieved and all the scenes have a functional presence and contribute to a final sense of unity. All the plays analyzed are successful in enhancing tension, by suspense and surprise, one of Shaffer's most important achievements. Besides, Shaffer dominates the cinematic language: he knows how to edit scenes, cut, make collage, focusing the attention of the audience by the use of light and color, together with sound effects. Indeed he uses many devices from the cinema—flashbacks, soundtrack effects, light changes, and choreography. All that, combined with intensity of movements and emotions, leads him to achieve a climax which has great impact upon the audience. The point of attack in his plays is usually late, helping to preserve the unity of action, so important for the Greeks and so vital for Aristotle. After the climax, Shaffer provides a scene that shows the new condition of the protagonist, the *dénouement*: Yonadab cursed by David to be a voyeur for eternity, Salieri declaring himself saint of the mediocre, Pizarro's cry before the dead body of Atahuallpa, Dr. Dysart's monologue, with Alan in his arms.

Pathos is artistically treated by Shaffer: violent scenes are usually enacted on the stage, but always through a stylized performance. His plays also include ***nemesis***, the wrath of a God- Equus, Yaveh, Atahuallpa's divine nature, Mozart's God.

Shaffer's plays also present scenes showing the reversal of the condition of the hero-*peripety*-followed by *anagnorisis*. *Catharsis* is problematic; it comes linked with an intense sense of fear, although with a less evident sense of pity. Pity is evident in **The Royal Hunt** and **Equus**, but problematic in **Amadeus** and in **Yonadab**. Sympathy is ruined by cynicism and indifference. And this seems to link Shaffer with post-modern time, in which the old values, principles, and ideals are discredited by an empty pragmatism and individualism. However, the audience pities the innocent suffering of Atahuallpa, Tamar, and Mozart, for example, and may identify themselves even with the villainous protagonists because Shaffer presents them as very human characters, assaulted by the same forces the audience faces daily. Therefore, *catharsis* is possible in Shaffer's plays, because emotion is intensely portrayed and conveyed to the audience, triggering pity and fear and their purgation.

The use of masks in Shaffer yields extra meanings which reveal the playwright's wish to recover and re-elaborate that Greek device. Masks now help in characterization and show how individuality may be lost, and how the essence of things may be lost in the appearance of people and events, how form seems again more important than the essence, how people protect themselves by wearing masks, and how there is a dichotomy between what the individual really is and what he appears to be, between what he intends to be and what society expects him to be.

Shaffer has many points of contact with the Greek tragedians: the protagonists, the themes proposed, the several theatrical devices used, the unity of plot, of action, the emphasis on emotion, pity and fear, *catharsis*, the psychological, philosophical, mythological depth. Besides, Shaffer's plays debate social institutions and values, as well as the drama of the individual, his inner conflicts. Indeed Shaffer adopts the Greek idea of tragedy and reshapes it with post-modern decadent values and views and up-to-date technical resources.

Shaffer has been criticized for creating insincere, unreal, shallow characters, with no emotional density, characters, some critics say, that always present the author's own traces (Hope-Wallace *apud* Cooke and Page 11). But the truth is that his plays evince serious themes (although, for some critics, out of the main stream), which are spectacularly well treated. He successfully mixes traditional forms with psychological depth, creating great spectacles, with characters who address fluent, beautiful and enchanting dialogues. He presents new ideas behind old conventions, exploring all the present devices at hand (of course with the help of a competent director). Indeed, Peter Shaffer is ambitious and so were his projects like, for example, **The**

Royal Hunt, but he displays courage and creativity in presenting an epic background in a time of less daring theatrical productions.

There is one theme that some critics do not forgive Shaffer for: the insistence on existential problems and the recurring fight with God. According to their view, his characters are always fighting God and being defeated. Besides, they say, Shaffer's weakness becomes evident in his dialogues, usually too emotional and rhetorical. Well, emotion is present and Shaffer does not deny the fact. In relation to his rhetorical language, to my mind, it is very well used, with elegance and competence. His " rhetoric" is always competent, as his stylization is always of good taste and never fals into mere artificialism.

The criticism that Shaffer does not discuss the question of justice, or social changes, or cultural crises, but only metaphysical subjects, does not stand. **The Royal Hunt**, for example, deals with the confrontation of two halves of the world, a historical confrontation between Europe and America, and it touches social matters, showing clearly the inconsistencies of the European way of life, in contrast with the order and justice found in the Inca Empire. Shaffer also makes a criticism of society in **Yonadab**, and even in **Amadeus**. Besides, there is in Shaffer the positive aspect of beauty, the richness of dance and miming, the well- worked presence of the narrator, songs, and a great variety of sounds. However, Shaffer's plays have developed more the psychological dimension of the individual, a characteristic of the modern sensibility. As already stated, his most important themes are in tune with the post-modern crisis, for today we see the cult of the disenchanted hero, together with the demythologizing of the past. Religion and history have lost their previous credit (Hen ix). As in Greek tragedy, in Shaffer's plays the prescribed order is violated by the protagonist, but restored in the sequence. Shaffer shows the killing of passion in modern society, the killing of intuition, the excess of rationality, the pressure of society and its economic, ideological, and political urgencies.

In fact, post-modern tragedy is different from the traditional classical model, because the world has changed and so have the theatrical conventions. Reality, morality and truth are quite pluralistic today, and the political, historical, sociological utopias have ended. Besides, scientificism and the cult of technology mark the present time. Ironically, individualism prevails although the world may be seen as a global village, thanks to information science, Internet and telecommunications. Cinema and television have altered the normality of social life, and Shaffer has expressed that in his plays, although not in all of them. Going to the theatre has become a non-political act, just entertainment, with no patriotic, ritualistic, or religious importance. In the

present commercialized time, theatrical spectacles are generally represented by the great productions of Broadway, as cinema is represented by Hollywood. Besides, the two great wars put an interrogation mark in human history. In addition, the traditional notion of family has been altered, and new questions have been raised, concerning human relations, man and woman relationships, parents and children's relations which have been drastically altered. Social problems have not really been solved. Mass media enjoys a pervasive influence and rules social life. In theatre, we see the emphasis on psychological drama, in the internalization of conflicts, on subjectivity and individuality. This can be well illustrated through Hofmannsthal's **Elektra**, a case of psychopathology (Nuñez 211). Times have changed, kings are not so important, the value of the individual has also changed, the importance of society and of the community are altogether changed. But the idea that our time, because of cybernetic paraphernalia, genetics and technology, is non-tragic is, to say the least, very arguable.

Steiner defines Ibsen's tragedies as "fables of the dead, set in a cold purgatory" (296). The same may be said of Shaffer's plays since they display the disillusion of the hero, the disenchantment with the world, the lack of vitality, of life. Dysart, Salieri and Yonadab seem to live in a purgatory. The suffering of the modern man is dry and private. Violence, horror, and terror of the daily life are commonplace in the newspapers (Steiner 315). But that is precisely what indicates a crisis of morality, of ethics, of justice, of hope, of God and religion.

For Steiner, the problem of the lack of tragedy in modernity lies in the absence of mythology. However, modernity has its own myths, negative ones, maybe, plural, materialistic, economic, scientific, psychological. Steiner comments that the modern artists have tried to invent new myths (321) but that a private mythology is not enough to recover the sense of tragedy. In fact, the Greek tragedians worked with old and shared myths, and this is what the modern author needs. However, even Greek mythology was in crisis, being questioned by the tragedians themselves. According to Steiner, the Greeks had a totality, and this is what we do not have. For sure, without a totality, a common spiritual ground, the audience cannot be touched, communication becomes impossible, and the social order becomes a chaos. But the present society has some sort of common ground, maybe because of the phenomenon of the globalization of economy, Internet, etc. Curiously some modern writers have already "translated" the classic into a new dress—Eliot, Sartre (Steiner 324-5). And a revival of the classic myths reveals no power exactly because the context has changed (330). Shaffer, fortunately, has avoided the mere

rereading and readapting of the classics, and preferred to use Latin-American stories, psychoanalysis, stories of a celebrity of classical music, and a biblical narrative.

Shaffer's plays indeed show less emphasis on the spoken word; they are less developed in terms of language if compared to the exuberance of the Greek tragedies. In fact, Shaffer privileges everyday language, with some moments of rhetorical flies and lyrical trances, as in Dysart's and Pizarro's monologues, or when Salieri comments on Mozart's divine music. Above all, Shaffer's language is always appropriate to its context and to the characters. Sometimes, he makes use of slang, and even vulgar language, in **Amadeus**, **Yonadab**, and **The Royal Hunt**, but never gratuitously. Some say that his plays are too showy, but this is for sure the result of an estrangement attained through a more dynamic and kinetic theatre, a new proposal by Shaffer. He does not intend or pretend an innocent appropriation of the past. His heroes are heroes of modernity, they fight mainly with themselves, undergoing inner conflicts.

If Shaffer's plays display many physical movements and great agitation, it is because he intends another kind of theatre, less verbose, more balanced by physical movements, choreography, music, sound effects, light, colors, brightness. He wants to touch the core of the audience's emotion and disturb their notion of normality, their tedium, the boredom of normal life. In part, the skepticism against Shaffer is due to the great popularity of his plays, to his great box success. It is part of the modern high culture to suspect about the validity and seriousness of what is popular. It is true that Shaffer deals with elements of popular culture- themes, forms, cinema, music, dance- but his treatment of them is careful and competent because he never loses sight of his aims.

Finally, I conclude that Shaffer's plays are sound examples of contemporary tragedy because they treat modern themes with tragic grandeur, using the heritage of the Greeks but adapting it to modern cultural circumstances, which are more fragmented, more psychologically oriented, more individualistic and skeptical than the Greeks'. Shaffer's heroes are more individualistic, but are subject to great dilemmas, faced as they are by great contradictions between external and internal events, between what happens outside and inside them. His characters are genuinely human and embody relevant problems, such as the urge for spirituality which is something inherent in human beings, which provide empathy with the public. The audience perceives theses conflicts and identifies with the hero's condition, experiencing a sense of complicity that guarantees their engagement in terms of pity and fear, and consequently of

catharsis. And in this may lie the force of his plays and the reason for his great success with the public.

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